the PARIS REVIEW

4

IRWIN SHAW
an interview

Howard Moss

James Leo Herlihy

ugene Walter

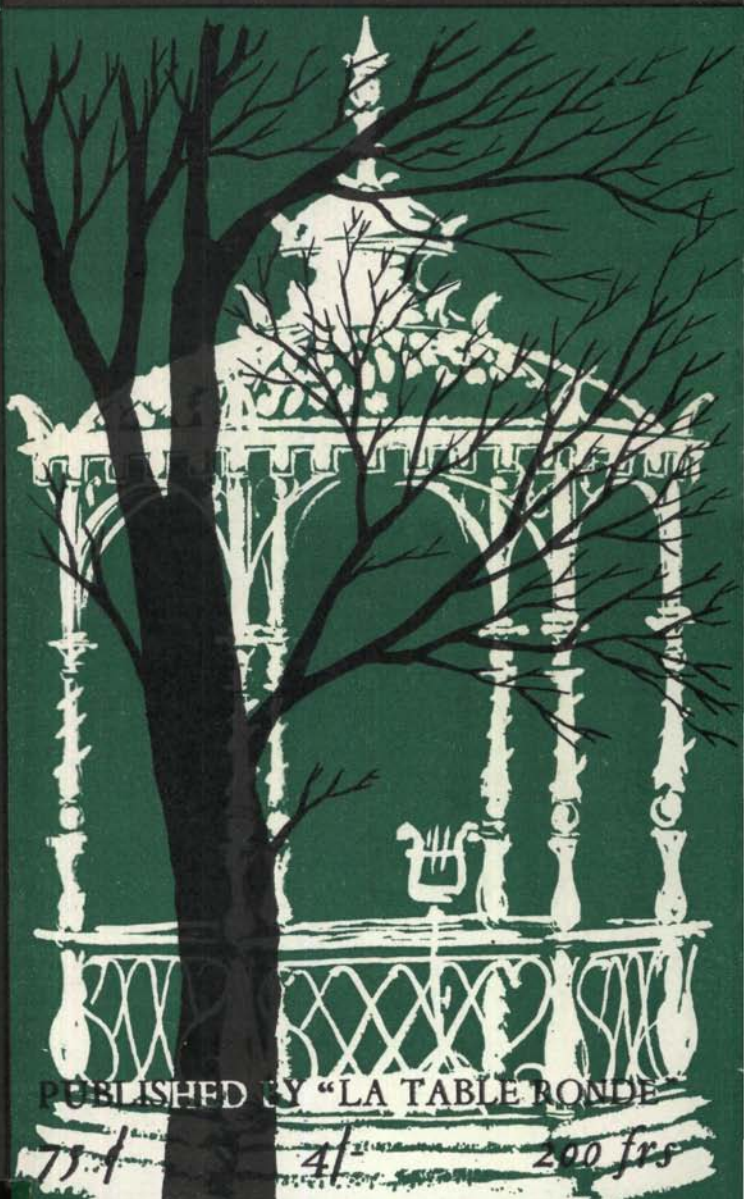
drawings by
HANS ERNI

Michel Beret

hort Stories

Poetry

WINTER
1953



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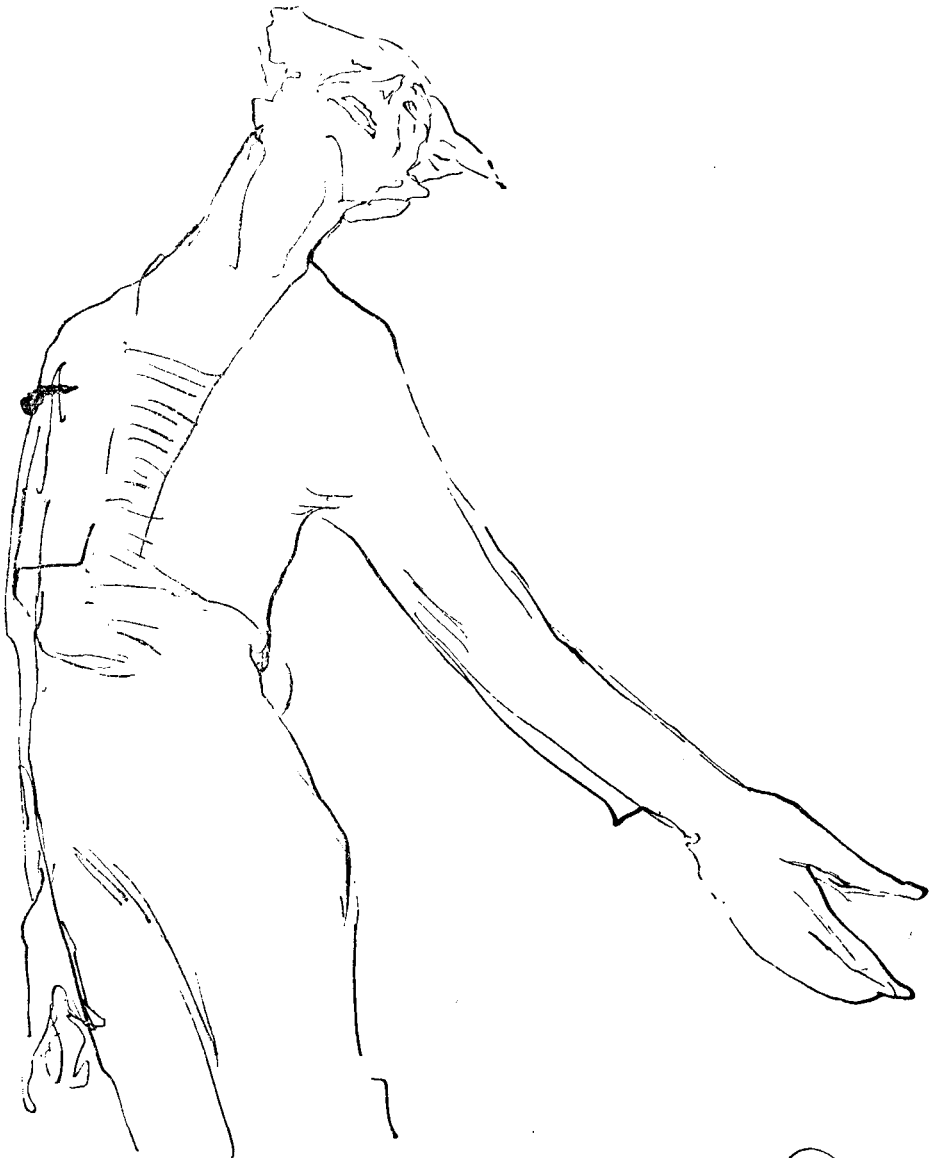

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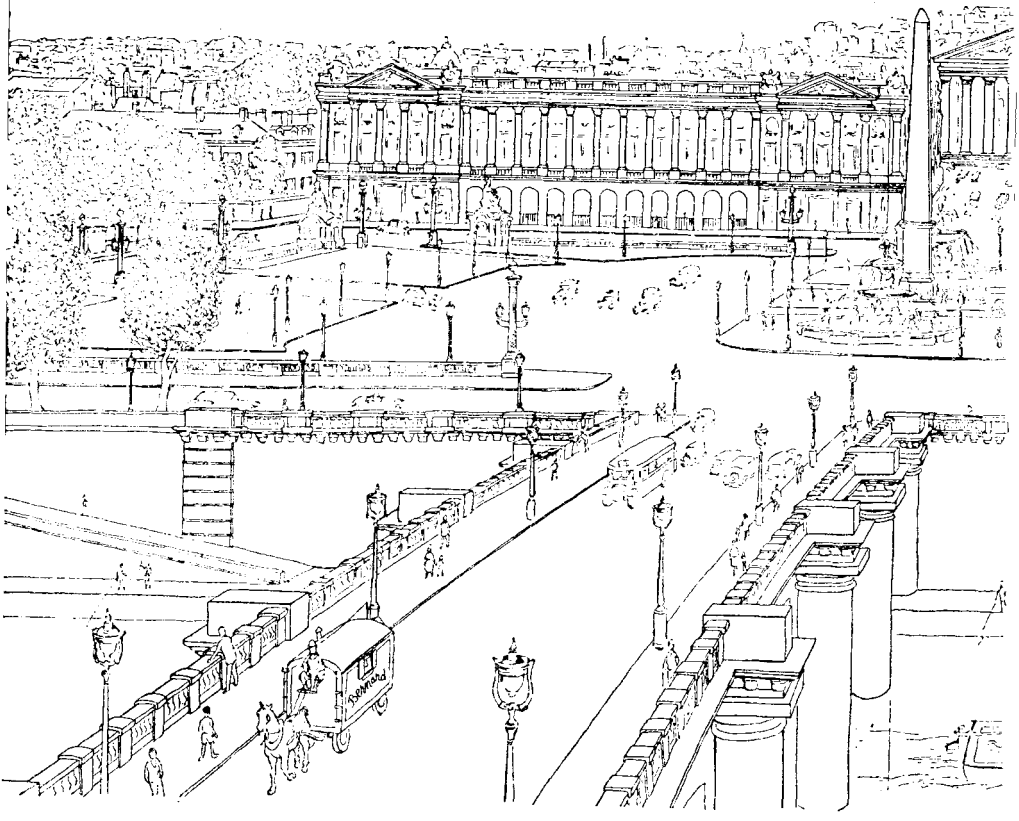

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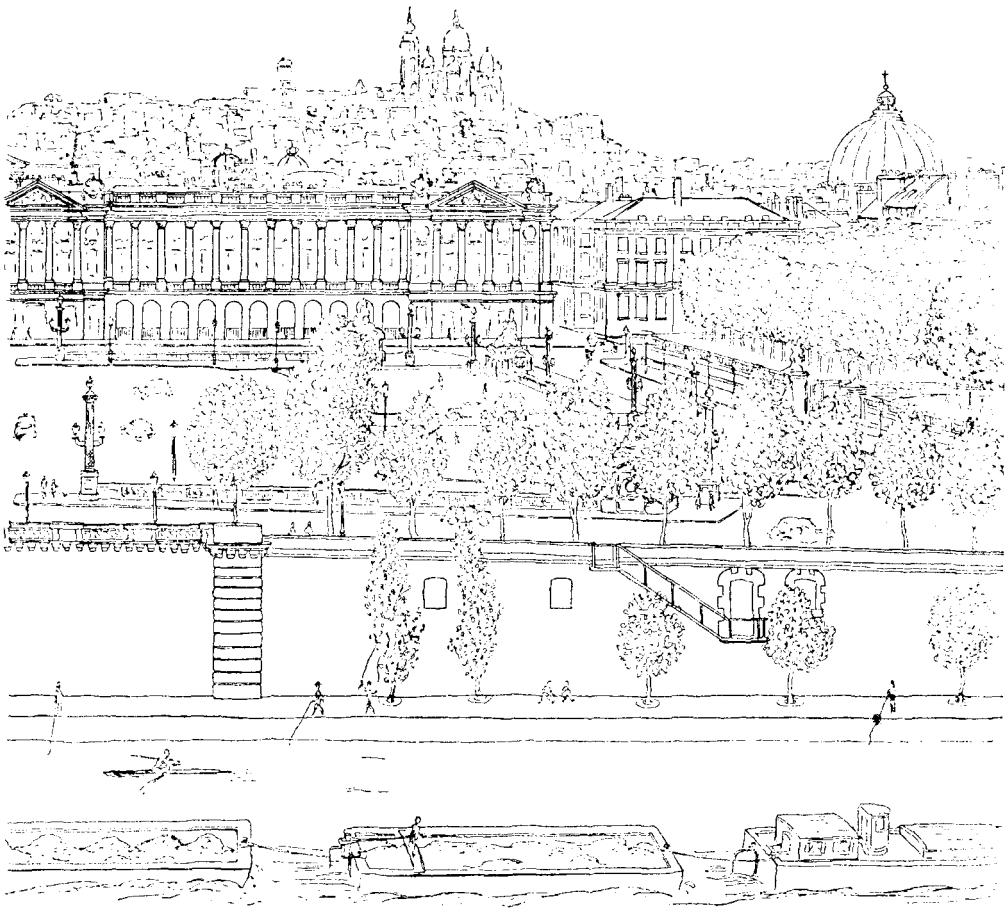

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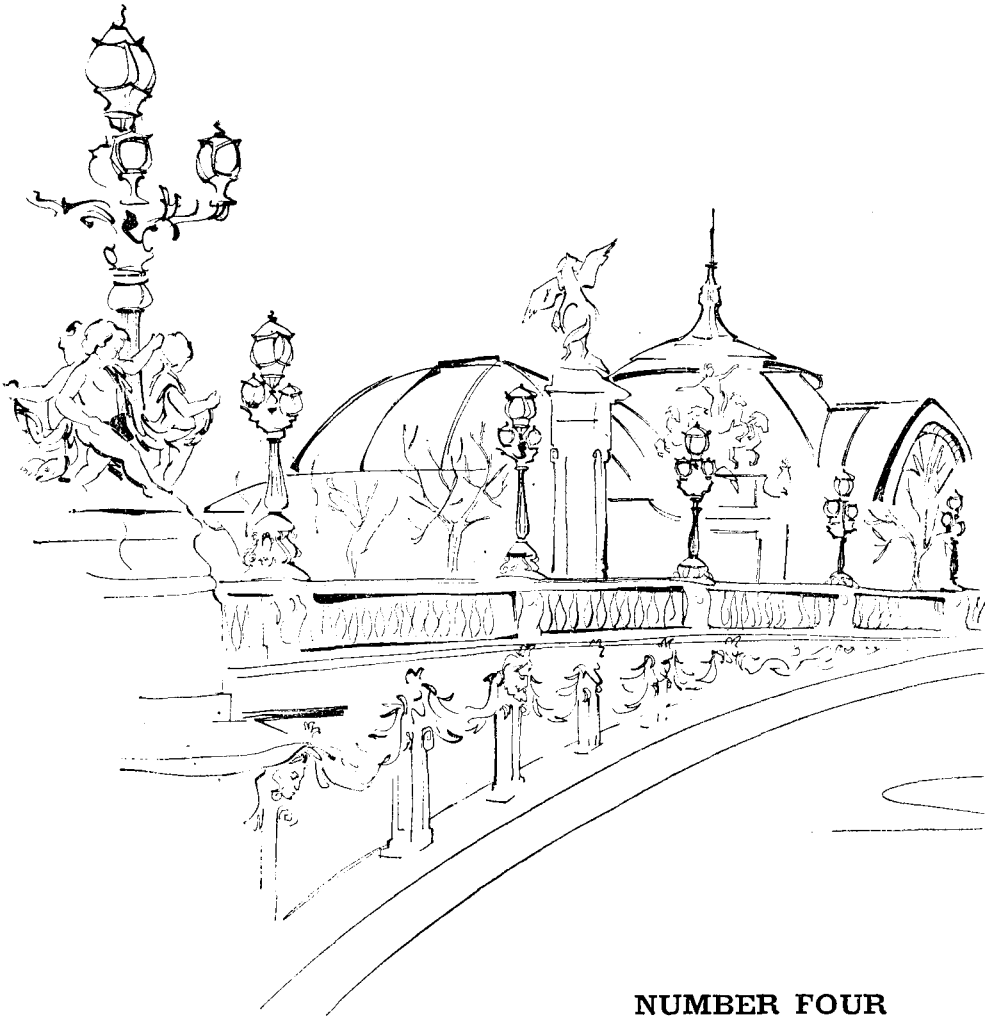

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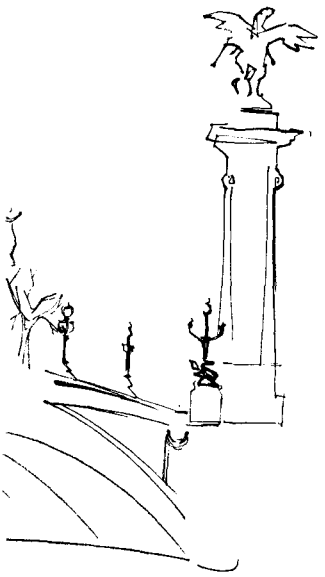

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THE SLEEP OF BABY FILBERTSON

RUDY was awake now but his body had not changed from its position of sleep. Under the sheet he lay coiled like a serpent, his knees and elbows and his face all nestled in a fat and private circle. His mother stood at his bedside.

"Baby Filbertson, I'm tired and I'm mad. It's two o'clock in the afternoon. Dammit, I said p. m. Tell *me* you never dipped into my phenobarbitals last night!"

He answered without moving: "Mother, I swear hand on the Bible, if I touched one pheeny in this house last night, God strike me dead an' you along with me!"

"Leave me the hell out of it, brother," she said.

"Anyway I'm sick," Rudy said, "somethin' wrong with m'head."

"You think your head's in bad shape *now*..." She held up the back of her hand and threatened his face with it. "Groggy from stolen phenobarbs is your trouble."

"I already swore on the Bible may I be struck dead," he said, still without moving. "I wasn't struck, was I?"

"Show me somebody sleeps fourteen hours 'thout a pill and brother, I'll show you a cock-eyed snake-in-the-grass wouldn't know the truth 'f he got hit on his head with it." She closed her fat hand over the corner of the sheet and ripped it from the bed. "Git up!"

Rudy rolled over on his back and covered his private section with the pillow. Then he looked up at his mother who stood with arms akimbo, smoke pouring from her nostrils, and an inch of cigaret hanging from her lips, grinning like a nasty

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cartoon bulldog. Rudy sat up: "You're a sonofabitch," he said.

Her hand landed with great force and speed on the side of his face. Rudy screamed as his head struck the mattress.

"Make me sick," she said, waddling out of the room, her bedroom slippers going whoosh-slap whoosh-slap under her like the fins of some walking dream-fish. "Nineteen years old, I think he's still in di'pers." The door slammed shut.

Rudy lay looking at his body, the breasts as full as a young girl's; below them, a larger more distant hill of stomach and near the foot of the bed, two groups of toes like uncooked sausages pointed vaguely toward the ceiling. Rudy was good and damned fed up. Trying to get one puny little sleeping capsule from her was like sticking up the First National Bank. He had a good notion just to pack up a few things, including enough money to get as far as Hollywood, and just leave her there in the middle of New York to shift for herself. —And brother, when it came to that, she knew how to shift. She got *her* sleeping pills, didn't she? You bet your bottom dollar she got hers. And enough money to last for life, too: had his father certified mentally non-something-or-other and locked up at Belle Grove (not that the skunk didn't deserve it), then went to court and had the separation made legal, tied up half of the old cuss's money in a trust fund so she could give up day nursing and sit on her fat tail for life without twitching a muscle she didn't want to twitch. Except the one under her left eye. That'n probably be twitching from now on. Doctor called it nerves.

Maybe he'd go away alone, to anywhere, even if it was back to New Orleans, then get himself a job though Lord knew where: perhaps a loan office could use him for evaluating pearls, or the movies in funny fat person parts, or maybe he'd brush up on his piano and take voice, if they ever stayed in one place long enough, and get himself a job singing and playing in a saloon. Eventually, of course, Rudy knew he'd end up in Hollywood.

He could hear the whoosh-slap of her slippers approaching on the other side of the door. He got out of bed and stepped

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into his trousers. She opened the door and stood watching him.

"If you ain't a sight," she said. "Gain another pound, you be a *real* hog, that's for damn sure!"

"'Bout like you, Mother?" he said. "That's what I'm aimin' for."

"Yeah, 'bout like me, son. Titties an' all."

The ironing board was set up in the main room of the apartment. There were three altogether: two bedrooms and this main room which was used for everything but sleeping and bathing. In an alcove near the bathroom door stood a cream-colored refrigerator on which a previous tenant had glued a picture of a yellow swan eating a pink water lily. Rudy opened the door. Inside were four bottles of Coca-cola, half a melon, a bottle of chocolate milk and a pound of bacon. He took one of the Coca-colas and the melon, sat on the couch, turned on the radio and began to eat.

Daisy Filbertson held the iron upsidedown under her face. "If you wasn't so soft in the head you'd get you a nylon shirt, don't need pressin'." She spat on the iron; it sizzled. "Listen t'me, Baby Filbertson, turn off that damn radio, your mother's talkin'. I know you don't give one lovely hoot if I iron from now till hell won't have it, but I do brother. *Turn that damn thing off!*"

Rudy was listening to a radio commercial paid for by a correspondence school that taught Spanish in six weeks. Maybe he'd slip away to Trinidad and become a calypso singer.

"...don't leave it sit there," Daisy was saying as the commercial gave place to a song called *Give Me a Kiss To Build a Dream On.* "Put that rind in the pail and take it all on down t' the street. Been bad pork in there since last night, startin' t' smell."

The entire island seemed to have been submerged in an ocean of hot light and walking through it required a swimmer's effort. Women invented parasols made of newspapers to blind them from the sun, and men blotted their foreheads

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with handkerchieves and squirmed inside their suits. Yet it seemed to Rudy more bearable on the street than it had been inside where Daisy's ironing sent the temperature even higher.

He wandered down Broadway and after only a few blocks he was tired. He went into the subway station at 72nd Street, stuck a dime in the slot, pushed through the turnstile and descended the stairway into an airless chamber illuminated by naked light bulbs. Several people stood about, with the unhappy but patient air of travellers to Hell who realize the journey is inevitable, waiting for the Seventh Avenue Local.

When the train arrived, Rudy boarded the last car. He stood at the rear and looked out the window, and then he watched the station platform grow smaller and smaller as he and the train were drawn deeper and deeper with greater and greater speed into the tunnel. It was like that quick and sensuous falling into sleep on a night when he'd stolen one of the magic pheenies. Occasional shafts of sudden light dropped from gratings in the street above and made flaws in the blackness.

Now ordinarily he'd go to bed and the dreams took him right smack back to Louisiana where there was nothing but trouble: night before last he'd barely closed his eyes but what he found himself going through that car accident all over again. Started out by driving down Jackson Street, turned the corner into Chinaberry Avenue, got to looking at that same coon leaning on the lamppost, and just like it was happening all over again only this time faster, forgot to straighten up in time and there he was parked on the sidewalk with the car buried up to its windshield in Hodgeson's furniture store, and the same fat policeman lying flat on his back on one of the display beds in the window, his right leg bleeding like a live pig stuck through the middle with a barbecue sword.

Everytime he dreamed it, Rudy'd wake up laughing—also just as it'd really happened: sat there laughing like a fool hyena and made the policeman all the madder—but in his

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dreaming the laughing hurt him some, like it was his own leg bleeding. And then all day long he'd see, as if through a window in his mind, way off somewhere, that colored boy leaning on the lamppost like he was holding up the world.

Rudy did not want to think about the people of his dreams but they often visited his mind uninvited. The principal figure was the young Negro. Rudy would always see, as if tattooed in pink on the man's brown neck, a long sickle-shaped scar which stretched from his left ear to his adam's apple and then descended down the length of his throat. His eyes were kind and warm but in the kindness itself, Rudy sensed some terrible store of violent energy that attracted him at the same moment that it repelled him. Rudy could not imagine the nature of the harm this kind-eyed Negro's dark and unfathomable cunning would one day inflict upon him. Nor could he remember any longer whether the Negro on the streetcorner looked like the person he knew from dreaming, or if his identifying marks, the eyes and the pink scar, had been placed there by that other dark and unknown stranger, the artisan who designed the dreams.

The train came to a stop at 50th Street. Rudy climbed out of the subway pit, his energy by now at a low ebb. He hated New York for its heat and for its concrete that sustained the heat even through the night all summer long, and his mother for her strange restlessness that had brought them here several weeks ago.

It was her often-stated intention, now that she had achieved a degree of economic freedom from her husband whom she hated, to see the world. But Rudy could not understand why it was that each time they arrived in some new city—San Francisco, Santa Fe, Chicago, and now New York—she would install herself like a hibernating bear in some unpleasant cave and refuse to move outside the door. It made their travelling absurd and their lives pointless. On the journey itself she would fill herself with phenobarbital and seldom looked out the train window except perhaps to discern whether it was night or day. After they had been in a city for several weeks or months, he might come home at almost

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any moment to find that, without warning or even a hint of any kind, she had packed their bags and had engaged space for them on a train or a bus to some new destination.

"Seen enough o' this damn town," she'd said on the afternoon they'd left San Francisco. "Get your face washed, Baby, we got a train to catch at four-thirty."

"Seen *enough* of it!" Rudy had said. "Seen nothin' of it's the fact of the matter!"

"Lousy cotton-pickin' fog!" she grumbled. "Come on, get your shirt on!" Rudy remembered that in Santa Fe there'd been too much cotton-pickin' sunshine and in Chicago the factory smoke; it was yet to be learned which aspect of New York she would find too damn cotton-pickin'.

During their first days here she had said at least six different times: "Goin' out Monday morning t'see that dame with the torch in New York Harbor, providin' the weather's decent." But when the weather had been decent, a backache had stopped her, or she'd had to stick around the place as she was expecting some imaginary telegram.

It was as if Daisy had reached a point in her living at which she suspected that life held no further promise, and rather than to risk finding this true, she went through it grumbling, complaining, partially hypnotized by sleeping capsules, her unconscious mind artfully avoiding direct contact with whatever remained to be experienced.

Now, from the top of the subway steps, Rudy could see the marquee of the Roxy Theatre. It was featuring a Ginger Rogers picture and on its stage was an ice show. He bought a ticket and went inside: the temperature was thirty degrees cooler; a girl with yellow hair sold him a package of Life Savers; ushers stood like palace guards at a dozen inner doors; on either side of the stage, high in the theatre's lofts, were golden stairways that lead to no one knew what secret chambers and, covering it all like the ceiling of heaven itself, were delicate designs carved in wood and lighted by dim hidden sources; on the screen Miss Rogers was seated at a cocktail bar quarreling with an elderly gentleman.

But Rudy's mind was never quite so taken up with what

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happened on the screen as with what might be happening instead if he were playing a particular role himself and could follow random impulses and take the story in directions more to his own choosing. Now and then the entrance of a beautiful person required some quick revision of the plot, or the music under the story would speak out some fevered crescendo that brought his dreaming to a new beginning. And in this way, the hottest hours of Rudy's afternoon passed.

Finally, the ice show came to an end. The magnificent curtains descended like the skirts of a mammoth goddess from between the golden stairways. A swift march began to play as the people left their seats and pushed their way up the aisles, fighting those now coming in. In the back of Rudy's neck was that cotton candy ache that comes of looking too long at too many bonbon colors of changing lights and glitter-spangled costumes. His eyes ached and he was hungry.

He wandered, somewhat dizzy, into the daylight. By the time he reached the sidewalk his hunger had grown almost to pain. He walked west on 50th Street in search of hot dogs but before he reached a restaurant some sweet aroma gripped his nose like a claw and drew him into a shop where a dozen varieties of popped corn and nuts had been dipped in a golden liquid candy.

He bought a bag of caramel corn and returned to the street; the first mouthful was delicious, but at the moment it reached his stomach he began to feel ill. Rudy could never understand this chemistry of pleasure, the way it seemed that all sweetness was in reality a poison. But the hunger drove him to take another mouthful, and then a third.

All at once a police whistle shrieked, an automobile sounded in his ear, a woman's voice said: watch out mister! and Rudy felt a sudden heavy push in his stomach. Then he was lying on his back in the street, surrounded by a steadily growing crowd.

"Here's the driver of the car," said a woman's voice.

"You hurt, kid?" a man asked.

Rudy's right hand was bruised where he had tried to break his fall, and in his left, as if it had been the widow's baby

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snatched in the nick of time from the burning house, he clutched the white sack of caramel corn. He was not seriously hurt and he knew it. More than anything else he felt humiliated and foolish. "Why don't everybody go away and leave me alone?"

The man who had driven the car helped Rudy to his feet.

"You hurt?"

"No, I ain't hurt; just get back in your damn car and drive away."

A woman's voice behind Rudy said: "It was your fault, sonny, you walked right into him."

"You want me to take you home, kid?" the driver asked.

Rudy felt caged in by the crowd. He moved sullenly to the sidewalk. "I'm not hurt for Chrissake, lea' me alone."

He tried to walk as if nothing were wrong, but his bruised knee caused him to limp. He was less than half a block away when he could see from the corner of his eye someone following him. This irritated him and he began to walk faster.

One night he had dreamed he was walking down Chinaberry Avenue with a parasol over his head—stark naked! He felt like that now. The young man behind him ran to catch up with Rudy. He was a Negro, tall, copper-skinned, athletic, probably somewhere in his twenties. "You want me to get you a taxi?" he said, "there's something wrong with your foot."

His first impulse was to send the stranger away, but when Rudy frowned and looked into the man's face, the smile he found there was so kind and warm that he was instantly disarmed by it. In the Negro's manner was some deeply appealing intimacy, the unequivocal sympathy of an animal. It was as if a pair of invisible arms, brown and strong as an animal's, had reached out and surrounded him to protect him from the eyes of the street, and to soothe his hurts for which he suddenly felt no shame.

The young Negro called a taxi. He opened the door and Rudy climbed in. "I think you better go right on up to a doctor," the Negro said. Rudy watched as the young man closed the cab door.

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"Won't you get in and ride uptown with me?" Rudy said. The stranger smiled and shook his head. "Naw, I'll just catch a bus."

As the Negro turned to walk away, Rudy was suddenly gripped with panic. "Hey, wait a minute!" he said. When the young man returned to the taxi and lowered his head through the window, Rudy could find nothing to say. But the thought of being separated from the stranger terrified him. "I don't even know your name," he said finally. The other man thrust his hand through the open window: "I'm Clyde," he said, "Clyde Williams."

Rudy took Clyde's hand in both of his and held it tightly. "My name's Rudy. I want you to ride with me, hear? Come on, Clyde, please!"

Clyde continued to smile but a frown settled into his face between his eyebrows: "You got money enough to pay the cab?"

Rudy said he had.

"Well, you're all right then, Rudy; you just tell the fella where you want to go, and he'll take you there. Everything's going to be all right. I'll see you some more, Rudy."

Clyde withdrew his hand from Rudy's. The frown left his face, he smiled broadly, waved his hand and walked away. The taxi started to move. Rudy moved forward onto one of the small folding seats and stuck his face out the window. As the cab reached the corner, Rudy saw Clyde again. He was waiting for a bus and, as he waited, he leaned on a lamp-post.

The traffic light was green and the driver placed the gears into second position and withdrew his foot. As the car moved more rapidly forward, Rudy was able to get a last good look at his friend. He was certain that he could discern, on Clyde's neck, glistening from his ear to his throat and disappearing down into his shirt, a scar which was like a sickle tattooed in pink.

Rudy got out of the cab in front of his apartment house. He paid the driver and walked slowly up the steps to the

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third floor. He was no longer aware of the pain in his leg.

Daisy was lying on the couch with her eyes closed, her glasses on, a small cigaret butt protruding from her lips. When Rudy closed the door, her eyes popped open.

"Where you been, brother?"

Rudy flopped into a chair, and said nothing. The muscle under Daisy's left eye began to twitch as she came more fully awake. "Baby Filbertson, I said where you been?" Rudy slowly drew his pantleg up past his knee, baring a red bruise the size of a quarter.

"Well!" Daisy said, "Twinkletoes fell on his ass!" She went into the bathroom and returned with a first aid kit. "It's iodine and it's gonna hurt, so keep your mouth shut." Then she painted the wound liberally and when she had finished the edges were a deep orange. "Didn't flinch, did he? I believe m'soul he's turnin' into a man! Now what happened?"

Rudy was slumped deep into the chair, it contained him like giant arms. "Like t'got killed is all," he said. "Damn Greyhound bus come tear-assin' around 50th Street corner o'Broadway. I'd got squashed good haddin been for some coon shoved me outa the way, nick o'time. Anyway, fell on m'knees."

"You let a nigger shove you on the sidewalk?"

"Yeah. I let'im. Saved m'neck. You talk like a damn fool!"

Daisy went to the stove which was above the refrigerator and boiled some spaghetti. She opened a can of tomato soup and poured that over the top of it. Then she fried several strips of bacon. Daisy and Rudy ate their dinners in irritated silence. Then Daisy returned to the couch. She switched the radio on and began to thumb through a paperbacked detective novel.

Rudy went to his room. The air was still moist and warm even though the sun was gone. He removed his clothes and lay on the bed. In his mind he reproached himself for the way he had mishandled the events of the day. Should've got out of that damn taxicab right there'n'then, he thought;

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should've walked right over to that one called hisself Clyde Williams and said to him: Boy, who the hell're you, followin' me all the way up here from Louisiana, could swear I seen you in N'Orleans, Shreveport, Santa Fe, and Lord knows how many dreams you poked your black nose into. Should've had it right out with him there'n'then, make an end to it one way or the other.

Rudy went through this dialogue in his mind several times until he had memorized it, and through several variations of the same words in which he tried to improve on the original, and soon he was in a light sleep, a haunted ordinary non-pheeny sleep in which all the dreams were wild, terrible, filled with blazing technicolor violence: He was the captive of a band of dark-skinned gypsies who had taken him into a southern wood where they had built a large fire and tied him to a tree along side of it. Then like black magicians or voodoo madmen they danced and mumbled and shrieked grinning curses to an unbearable thump-thump-*thump* drumbeat which seemed to go on for a hundred days and nights. They had removed all of Rudy's clothes and, tied to the tree by the stifling heat of the fire, the perspiration fell like blood from his body, and caused itches impossible to scratch.

Suddenly there was complete silence. The gypsies sat by the fireside with brilliant savage-toothed grins fixed on their faces as if painted there. A fat gypsy squaw appeared before Rudy and stood so close to him he could smell her sour air on his face. Her eyes held his in a kind of hypnotic trance for a long moment and then, with a movement so quick he could not follow it with his eyes, she had withdrawn, from under her great shawl, a shining silver-bladed breadknife; with her free hand she took hold of his sex and with the knife she severed it from his body and threw it into the fire. Rudy was instantly released from the tree. He was handed a small pink parasol and ordered to dance.

Then there was a loud tapping sound that seemed to be made by the contact of a man's knuckles on a pane of glass.

This noise awakened him and the dream ended. Rudy sat up and looked about the room. But no one was there. After

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the raucousness of the dream, the entire world seemed to be in a state of iced silence. The table lamp issued a shrill white light that made the bedsheets look like icebergs gleaming under moonlight. The articles on the bureau seemed fragile, useless, as if they had been dried up while he slept and covered by invisible dust like objects in a museum which, once removed from their glass cases or unglued from their mountings, might crumble like sculptures in sand.

There was no accounting for this strangeness that had settled on the world. He wanted desperately to get away from it, perhaps into a pheeny sleep in some country so far away that when he woke he would never remember where he'd been, some deep dark warm sleep from which he would wake in some other place, a new and quiet land not on this earth.

Once more he heard the noise that had caused his dream to end. He was certain that someone was knocking on his bedroom window. He remained in bed, transfixed, chilled with fear, eyes on the window, listening. Now he could hear a voice calling to him: Rudy, let me in Rudy. I won't hurt you, Rudy, I'm your friend.

Rudy was no longer afraid. When Clyde's face appeared at the window, he recognized it instantly, and the long sickle-shaped scar as well. "Clyde, what you want?" he said. "What's the idea followin' me all over hell' n' back, and now come scarin' me like this, the middle of the night. You crazy?" But he no longer felt impelled to reproach Clyde. It was as if they had been friends for a long long time and once again, as on the street in the afternoon, Rudy trusted the warm animal eyes, and he could feel the brown strength of invisible arms reaching out, surrounding him to protect him. He heard Clyde's voice again: "Rudy, let me in. Please let me in."

"Wait a second, you black idiot," Rudy said, gently mocking his friend. "Wait'll I get m'drawers on." He scrambled into his trousers. Inside of him there was excitement, happiness.

By placing his foot on the steam radiator, Rudy was able to hoist himself up to the windowsill where he sat and looked

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out. The ground was three storeys below. There was no fire escape anywhere and the small concrete garden was empty. Rudy called from the window: "Clyde, Clyde! Where in hell did you go, you sonofabitch. Come back here."

Across the courtyard, a woman stood in a window. But no one else could be seen. A tall elm that grew out of the concrete garden stood perfectly still. The woman in the window watched Rudy. "Hey mister," she said in a loud stage whisper: "Pipe down will you. We got sickness here."

Climbing back into his room, Rudy's foot slipped from the radiator. He fell to the floor and landed once again on his hands and knees. The irritation of his early bruises angered him. He sat on the floor cursing and grumbling at first to himself, then gradually louder and louder. Everything seemed to have been conspiring for his annoyance: the heat which brought perspiration from his pores to roll down and cover that which had dried on his body while he slept; Clyde, who probably at this very moment sat crosslegged on the roof, laughing at him, and his mother who dragged him with her from city to city and never would stay in one place long enough for him to get a start on his voice lesseons—she didn't care if he ever got to Hollywood; the truth was that no one cared a good cotton-picking goddam for him, there it was, the fact of the matter right on the line—and he began to weep.

He leaned his head on the bed. The sheet felt mercifully cool against his cheek. He stopped crying for a moment to look longingly at that endless desert of icebergs made by the rumpled sheet. They were like the lifeless mountains and valleys one might find on a planet such as the moon was thought to be.

He drew himself to his feet and left his room in search of the sleeping capsules. He looked on the floor of the closets, behind the stacks of magazines on the mantlepiece, in all of the strange unlikely places his mother might think of, even back behind the cushions on the davenport and in a box of shredded wheat on the kitchen shelf. He knew she had them stashed away all over the apartment. Last night he'd found

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a bottle of them in an old shoe away under a pile of laundry on the bathroom floor and another believe it or not buried in a box of sanitary napkins on top of the toilet.

Several minutes later Rudy found himself digging with his bare hands into the depths of the garbage pail.

Finally, with the courage of utter desperation, silent as a burglar, Rudy turned the door knob and eased open the door of his mother's bedroom.

She was snoring. The room was partly illuminated by moonlight. He could see Daisy's face. The light shone on her moist eyelids and they glistened like false eyes. A bottle of capsules stood on the small table next to the head of her bed. Rudy crept slowly toward them, slowly, taking care to set his weight down a little at a time in order to test the strength of the boards: the weak ones were sure to creak.

He reached the side of her bed. Daisy's snoring continued. He stood stock-still, taking one long moment just to look at her. Her nightgown was torn and one of her breasts was revealed. It seemed limp and liquid as if its shape depended entirely upon gravity; the large brown nipple gaped blindly at the ceiling. It was just possible she'd be playing possum, waiting to catch him in the act. No, it was a real sleep. Her breathing was slow and noisy, her eye did not twitch at all as it would if she were awake.

Rudy had just put his arm forward, toward the table, when Daisy's hand sprung forward and gripped his wrist like a claw. Her eyes snapped open at the same instant. Rudy jumped back and cried out, and his heart was beating fast. At the same moment, he could not help admiring her speed.

"Caught ya damn sneak thief," she said, glowering at him, her hand still fixed bear-like on his wrist.

"Let go, dammit, you're hurtin'me."

"I've heard tell o' people that kill sneak thieves in the night, kill 'em dead as hell!" she said.

"You'd laugh out o' the other end, 'f I was to have a heart attack cause o' you."

"Attack ahead, Filbertson; g'on, turn blue! Could'n' care less."

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"I should've snuk in here 'th a breadknife 'n' stuck it in yer gizzard. Better keep on sleepin' like a sly damned old fox, or one o' these days I'm apt to."

Her eyes glared through the dark at him like false eyes with some nightmare knowledge frozen dead inside of them: "Brother, where you're headin' there won't be any bread knife left lyin' around."

Rudy's heart continued to beat too rapidly and the palms of his hands and the arches of his feet were moist and hot. His breath came in short nervous gasps and in his mind were the ghosts of a hundred or more dark-skinned gypsies. His mother's eyes were steady and cold as they penetrated his mind. Then a small grin disfigured her mouth, and her eye began to twitch.

"Mother," Rudy said in a sad voice that was almost a whimper, "can I have a pheeny?"

"*One*," she said.

He took a capsule from the bottle and replaced the lid.

"Thanks. M'damned head hurts."

He turned quickly and left the room. When he reached the bathroom, he could hear her calling to him: "Baby Filbertson! Baby Filbertson!" He drew a glass of cool water from the tap. She was still calling to him as he swallowed the capsule. "Baby Filbertson, come kiss your mother goodnight." But he pretended not to hear. He hurried to his bedroom and turned out the light. "Baby Filbertson," she called. Her voice was heavy and angry and it filled the house like an air raid siren in a doomed city. "Come kiss your mother, goddamit! Hear now?"

She could go to hell, he thought. Clyde was probably still seated on the roof, his head and shoulders silhouetted against the sky. He could go to hell too.

Rudy believed he could feel the capsule exploding inside of him, soothing him with its thousands of warm hands that massaged gently every vessel of his bloodstream. One pheeny was not very strong, he knew that, but there were many tricks for getting to sleep fast: for instance, arithmetic, get to thinking about figures and pretty soon you drop off.

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Ninety years from now, he began, I'll be a hundred and nine. Five years ago I was fourteen and weighed two hundred and eleven pounds. Nine years ago I was ten and weighed a hundred. Fifteen years ago I don't know what I weighed but I was four, and five years before that I wasn't even thought of yet and didn't weigh an ounce.

Imagining himself weightless, even unborn, he was soon fast asleep, wrapped into himself, knees and elbows and head grouped together. A sheet covered him entirely so that his bed was like a slab on which lay the corpse of some giant foetus.

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A BALCONY WITH BIRDS

The mind drowned in the sun may dream of birds,
  All downed, too heavy to arise, but when
The trees release their shuttlecocks of wings,
  Which bank of birds is but imaginings?
The eye must follow form, but from this height,
  I see how softly summer parries weight
Till everything alive weighs less and less
  And, thinly felt, the weighted consciousness,

No thicker than green leaves, or the meridian,
  Grows thinner, even, to absorb the sun.
All heaviness goes up, and up the clouds—
  Those thin patricians thick as Roman crowds
Assumpted in white togas into blue—
  Yet painful in the light, the real, in view,
Drifts back to the roof and the ailanthus tree—
  Fern of impermanence, but heavenly.

The light that hangs in the ailanthus weaves
  The leaves' leavetaking overtaking leaves.
The actual is real and not imagined,—still,
  The eye, so learned in disenchantment, sees
Two trees at once, this one of summer's will,
  And winter's one, when no bird will assail
The skyline's hyaline transparencies,
  Emptying its architecture by degrees.

Roundly in its fury, soon, the sun
  Feverish with light, goes down, and on
Come ambitious stars—the stars that were
  But this morning dimmed. Somewhere a slow
Piano scales the summits of the air
  And disappears, and dark descends, and though
The birds turn off their songs now light is gone,
  The mind drowned in the dark may dream them on.

—Howard Moss

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Pritchard discharged
~~The boy~~ shrugged. "Dead, ~~recovered~~, or destitute," he said. "Is it true that people refuse to die in America?"

"Yes," she said. "It would be an admission of failure."

He smiled and patted her gloved hand, which was clutching tightly into the middle bar. "You mustn't be ~~angry~~ angry that we're jealous," he said. "It's the only way we can show our gratitude." Gently, he loosened her fingers from the wood. "And you mustn't be so tight when you ski. Not even with your fingers. You mustn't even ~~frown~~ frown until the drill is — Loose, desperate and supremely confident." you go in for tea.

~~Constance chuckled. She had never met anyone who talked like that before, especially in the first five minutes.~~ "Is that how you are?" ~~she asked.~~

"Mostly desperate," he said.

Constance "What are you doing on this little beginners' ~~hill~~ slope, then?" ~~she asked.~~ Why ~~are~~ didn't you take the ~~cable car~~ teleferique up to the top?"

"I twisted my ankle yesterday," Pritchard ~~the boy~~ said, ~~"Overrated myself. Out of control and into a gully, with a great deal of style. So today, I can only do slow, majestic turns. But tomorrow we attack that one once more..."~~ The February issue

He gestured up toward the peak, half closed in with fog, with the sun

—*An extract from an unpublished short story recently completed by Irwin Shaw entitled* Host to the Worm.

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THE ART OF FICTION IV

IRWIN SHAW

INTERVIEWERS

You know I've been reading that story you spoke about, the last one in your collection of short stories *Mixed Company*, the one called *The Green Nude*. It's pretty funny.

SHAW

What do you mean by that? Pretty funny?

INTERVIEWERS

As a matter of fact, it's very funny. A very funny story.

SHAW

Damn right it's funny. Didn't I tell you it was?

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INTERVIEWERS

(*Placatingly*). No, I really mean it's a funny story. A damn good one. I didn't mean...

SHAW

I *told* you it was funny.

INTERVIEWERS

Yes, I remember you did, and you were quite right too...

SHAW

Well, that's good. Let's get this thing started right. I don't want to have to start by throwing you out of here.

INTERVIEWERS

(*Tentatively*). Yes, we don't want this to read "exit one interviewer", at least not so early in the piece...

SHAW

(*Laughing, effusive once more*). Here, let me fix you a drink.

Irwin Shaw is not always as sensitive discussing his own work. But he is suspicious, searching compliments for traces of cynicism, a writer intensely proud of his creative efforts, his two best-selling novels, *The Young Lions* and *The Troubled Air*, a number of plays, and short stories considered among the finest in contemporary literature. His sensitivity is somewhat belied by his physique, for on sight there is little in Irwin Shaw of what is popularly imagined as the sensitive artist. He has the heavy shoulders and short legs of the back-field star (which he was, at Brooklyn College), the muscled forearms of the pelota champion (one of the few sports he doesn't play), and the large close-cropped head typical of another of his pleasures—boxing. Ernest Hemingway has told the author Peter Viertel that there is only one way to handle Irwin Shaw in a boxing match: "Rip off your glove and sink your fingers deep into the bulge of his forearm, severing a few of the muscles there and rendering the arm more or less useless." Hemingway demonstrated on Viertel who has scars left to prove it and the rueful admis-

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sion that there isn't a man around, much less Irwin Shaw, who can stand up to *that* sort of punishment.

Irwin Shaw has had to fight for success from the start. Born in Brooklyn, he is one of the few inhabitants of that community who recognizes its limitations and from the age of twelve made a concerted effort to get himself enough money to cross the East River into Manhattan. He has come a long way from Brooklyn. He reached New York, then Hollywood, and in the past years he has lived in Europe, in Paris, Rome and now, the summer of 1953, in a villa perched on one of the foot-hills of the Pyrénées, with a view over the pink roofs of St. Jean-de-Luze to the lighthouse of Ciboure and the sea. In such pleasant surroundings, happy with his lovely wife and young son, Irwin Shaw continues to write with the concentration and driving energy which has brought him here. Writing for him is an intense and private occupation which allows no spectators from the outside world. He refuses to discuss work on which he is currently engaged. In the mornings he won't be disturbed; his wife answers the phone for him. In the afternoons he abandons his typewriter for other activities, all performed with enormous vigor. He plays a ferocious brand of tennis on the courts of the Chantaco Club in Ascain down the road, or travels at great speed in his Hillman-Minx across the Spanish border to the bull-fights. In the evening, more often than not, Irwin Shaw plays chemin-de-fer in the Casino in Biarritz, again with an intensity which is said to discourage those who consider calling "banco" when he holds the deal. Even relaxed at home, turning a large martini glass in his hand, Irwin Shaw dominates a room which includes a brown grand piano, an impressive panoramic view of the Pyrénées, a tapestry-sized portrait of an iron-faced woman on a green horse, one Maria-Léonie Mortier de Trevisé, Princess de Fancigny-Cystria (the landlady, Irwin Shaw calls her), and four ceiling-height sepia-brown plaques depicting the Four Seasons. All these Irwin Shaw overpowers, his laugh one of zestful enjoyment of life, and his humor the sharp quick natural wit peculiar to one whose formative years have been spent in Brooklyn.

When the interviewers called on Irwin Shaw, they found him with a huge bandage encasing his left hand. It turned out to cover a wound inflicted by the convertible

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mechanism of his Hillman-Minx clipping down hard at the end of his fingers, an accident jarringly out of character. The interviewers were sympathetic, but pleased somehow; if only for a moment Mr. Shaw appeared in a more natural perspective, his tragedy the small polite domestic nuisance that occurs to the completely average citizen in his completely average home.

SHAW

Well, shall we get off *The Green Nude*?

INTERVIEWERS

Mr. Shaw, did you begin by writing short stories, or plays?

SHAW

If you really want to know, my first job was writing Dick Tracy.

INTERVIEWERS

You mean you wrote the words in the balloons of the comic strip?

SHAW

No, no, no. It was a radio show. I pushed Dick Tracy into situations and rescued him five times a week. It made me a living and gave me time to do my own writing.

INTERVIEWERS

And you grew up in Brooklyn?

SHAW

I never left Brooklyn until I had made enough money to get out. I spent all my childhood and I did all my growing up there.

INTERVIEWERS

There's considerable Brooklyn background in your earliest stories.

SHAW

Naturally. It was the freshest in my mind then, when I started to write. But don't forget that almost every writer will tell you that events that happened to him before he starts writing are the most valuable to him. Once he starts writing he seems to observe the world through a filter. I believe that's true about writers; that the unconscious observation of things, a kind of absorbing of life that goes on before he becom-

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es a writer, that is what is most useful to him. When he starts observing things professionally and taking notes and trying to remember, he may collect a lot more but he loses the spontaneous quality and the flow. He becomes too systematic. It's his job to be, but he never gets anything as valuable as what he got unconsciously. He has become the observer rather than the actor. The best portrayal of the type that I know is the character of Tregorin in Tchekov's *The Sea-Gull*, and then there's Philip Quarles in Huxley's *Point Counterpoint* who wrote notes on his own reactions while his son was dying of meningitis.

INTERVIEWERS

Does the professional writer remain the observer rather than the actor throughout his career?

SHAW

He's apt to. Once trained, he stays the observer. Occasionally, he may find himself in a situation of pressure strong enough to change him, like war, and even then, he must be deeply involved in it to lose his observer's outlook.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you tell us something about the novel that came out of your war years?

SHAW

Yes, *The Young Lions*. Well, I started off with a very grandiose idea indeed, one that eventually proved not to be feasible and I had to give it up. I had three main stories, all based on character: Christian Diestl, the German sergeant, Noah Ackerman, a young American Jew, and Michael Whiteacre, a product of the theatre and radio world of Broadway and Hollywood. To link these three I introduced a fourth character, a bullet—the bullet fired by Whiteacre in the Black Forest which kills Diestl. I wanted to show it as lead in the ground, the miners that got it out, the engineers, the smelters, the sorters, the packagers, then the long chain of supply in the army that put the bullet finally in Whiteacre's cartridge belt. My idea was to show how we are all linked in this world—soldiers, civilians, the most sophisticated, the most primitive link being, in our time, death. There are

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other links, of course, but the strongest and most fundamental one in our century is killing. But I gave up the idea, even though it was the thing that gave me the impetus for the entire book. Aside from being grandiose, I think it was finally unnecessary. I found by concentrating on just three characters, I could say the things I had to say better than by trying to flesh out a rigid and theoretical skeleton.

INTERVIEWERS

And how about the characters in *The Young Lions*? Where do they come from? Are they based on real life or imagination?

SHAW

The major characters are inventions for the most part. Some of the minor characters I know.

INTERVIEWERS

Two minor characters in *The Young Lions* seem to be too overdrawn to be from real life.

SHAW

What? What was that?

INTERVIEWERS

Two minor characters...

SHAW

Who? Who?

INTERVIEWERS

Well, one of them was a Frenchman who ate martini glasses.

SHAW

Oh, that one. I knew *him*. He was a wild man, a good friend of mine. Used to beat up cops and eat martini glasses. I don't believe he's still at it, but he used to be a wild one, that Frenchman. Now who's the other?

INTERVIEWERS

The other was an army general, a division commander. He did something that doesn't seem consistent with the average general's behavior. He stood on a little hill under enemy fire and urged a *platoon* to come up with him and advance towards the German lines.

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SHAW

I never knew his name, but there was a legend that came out of the Normandy fighting about such a general—the sort of leadership you heard tell of General Roosevelt in Sicily. The fiction writer is constantly stumbling over the outrageousness of fact. Anyway, this particular fact isn't so outrageous. Plenty of generals got killed in the war. They didn't get killed eating Red Cross doughnuts.

INTERVIEWERS

Your main characters, though, are inventions?

SHAW

For the most part, yes. Some of the things that happened to Noah in *The Young Lions* happened to a man I knew, but he was an invention, regardless. I formed the character myself, for my own purposes and the purposes of the book, and put him through a series of events, some of which had actually happened and which I thought were fitting for the character. I didn't know Christian Diestl at all, although I talked to as many German prisoners of war as I could during the war, and to whomever I could in Germany and Austria right after the war. He wasn't an absolute invention—his dialogue and appearance in the first chapter were more or less suggested by something somebody once told me as having happened to her. But after that, it was all invented—taking into account the fact that here and there I used a story I'd heard or a scene I'd been a witness to, and which was useful for the character. Diestl, himself, I wanted to use as a symbol and an explanation, as well as an individual human being. I wanted to show how a man can start out decent, intelligent, well-meaning, as so many people in Germany must have been, even in the greatest days of Nazism—and wind up bestialized, almost bereft of humanity, almost dead to the instincts of survival even, as the Germans finally were, by believing in one false thing, which spreads and spreads and finally corrupts them entirely. The false thing I had Diestl believing in was the conviction that at that one time and in that one place (Austria) the end justified the means. The belief, in the course of the book, corrupts him to a point of fanaticism at which no horror any longer has the power to move or disgust him.

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INTERVIEWERS

Christian Diestl, then, symbolizes one of the more important morals of *The Young Lions*, that...

SHAW

What? What do you mean?

INTERVIEWERS

Well, critics of *The Young Lions* and your other novel, *The Troubled Air*, specify you as one of the few remaining novelists that try to put a message, or a moral, into their work. (*Shaw looked puzzled, vaguely bellicose*)... that perhaps you had an axe to grind.

SHAW

Who said that?

INTERVIEWERS

I don't know, but it seems to us to have been said.

SHAW

I don't believe I grind axes in my novels.

INTERVIEWERS

Well, perhaps some people have felt there was a tendency to stress points, to moralize.

SHAW

To propagandize?

INTERVIEWERS

Something like that, yes.

SHAW

That's the sort of thing critics say. You have to understand that a critic, in order to be a critic, always has to have his own pet theory about a writer. He has to put you in some definite category, stuff you in a pigeon-hole, and it doesn't make much difference to him if a great deal of your work, or even most of it, belongs in another category entirely. When this happens, when what you've written doesn't fall into the critic's chosen terrain, he ignores it. Those critics who call me a propagandist ignore my stories about young

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men and women, like *The Girls in Their Summer Dresses.* I don't think critics should categorize the writer; they should allow him scope. Don't be too disappointed if I say that what I was trying to do in *The Young Lions* was to show the world at a certain point in its history, its good and evil, and as many people as I could crowd into the book struggling through that world, trying to find some reason for trying to stay alive in it.

INTERVIEWERS

And in *The Troubled Air*?

SHAW

I wanted to show the decent and average American faced with social pressures of which he doesn't approve—in this case Redbaiting in the radio world. I picked a man who was decent, with a kind of modest, half-exhausted desire to do good, a man trying to coast through life without being a sonuvabitch. I couldn't pick a more positive person, a mean man or a saint (I've never found a saint in the radio business anyhow). He had to be the decent average American faced with a quite un-American problem—a problem to which there was no successful solution—and facing it with his only weapon, that of resignation—of the self-destroying and profitless, at least for the moment, gesture. But he doesn't resign immediately; he hedges and tries to qualify his position, a compromise that is his tragedy and his defeat.

INTERVIEWERS

You can't say then, that *The Troubled Air* doesn't express attitudes.

SHAW

Sure, it expressed attitudes, and I admit some of them were attitudes which I myself hold very strongly. But I don't think the novel was built around them. There were a lot of other ideas there with which I disagree violently, and the novel wasn't built around them either. Personally, I don't see how I could have been grinding any axe, but then that's just my opinion and I'm not a critic. *The Troubled Air* was attacked by the Communists as being reactionary and the editor of a minor book club got my publisher to swear I wasn't a Communist before he'd consider the book. That's

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what happens when you try to put down more than one point of view.

INTERVIEWERS

I wish you'd say something more about critics. There's something in the tone of your voice...

SHAW

What do you mean?

INTERVIEWERS

I mean when you get going on critics...

SHAW

I don't "get going". You just asked me what I thought and I was trying to tell you. For instance, I don't think most American critics want to accept the defeat of a decent man. If a hero is defeated it's got to be because of something wrong in him. In *The Troubled Air* the hero, for reality's sake was not presented as a winner of the Medal of Honor for heroism; but even so, for all that, he behaved with a thousand times more guts than any of the people in the radio business are actually behaving at this minute. He was finally hedged in and defeated by extremists on both sides, the left and right. Now there's something most American critics don't want to swallow. How such a man can be licked by something like the emotional climate of his country. It's too pessimistic and unheroic. The critics never...

INTERVIEWERS

Would you like to make a definitive statement about critics here and now?

SHAW

Listen, I did that long ago. I put down my final thoughts on the critics in the preface to a play called *The Assassins.* I was furious then. It's all in there and you can read it anytime.

INTERVIEWERS

But that was only about drama critics.

SHAW

Mostly, but I got in something about the other ones too.

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INTERVIEWERS

But weren't you a critic once yourself?

SHAW

Yes. I reviewed the drama for a season for *The New Republic.*

INTERVIEWERS

Did you like being a critic?

SHAW

Not much. It wore out the pleasure of going to the theater. There's an almost unavoidable feeling of smugness, of self-satisfaction, of teacher's pettishness, that sinks into a critic's bones, and I was afraid of it. You see it in all our newspapers and reviews. They've even gone so far as to dub this The Age of Criticism, and every time one of them comes out with a book proving that Melville had a wart on his right nostril instead of on his left, as had been generally supposed up to then, all the other critics start shivering in ecstasy and murmuring "Saint-Beuve come again." They're so damned polite to each other they swallow the worst kind of piddling nonsense from each other as though it was sugar candy.

INTERVIEWERS

One more question about criticism, if we may. Are you your own severest critic? Do you...?

SHAW

I am forced to say that I have many fiercer critics than myself.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you *really* enjoy writing, Mr. Shaw?

SHAW

I used to enjoy it more. It's tougher now, as one's power dwindles. Also the variety of choice increases. There used to be only one sentence to write. You wrote it and it was good and you let it stay. As you grow older and more experienced you find that where you had one sentence before, you have thirty possibilities now and you have to stew to find the best.

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INTERVIEWERS

As a successful writer, do you think that failure is a detriment? Particularly to the young writer who is the most easily discouraged?

SHAW

Sure it's a detriment, but I don't see how you're going to avoid it. And perhaps it isn't a bad idea for a young writer to taste failure before success, because he's going to know a lot more of failure before he's done.

INTERVIEWERS

That sounds pretty pessimistic.

SHAW

Why pessimistic? It stands to reason. Look, failure is inevitable for the writer. Any writer. I don't care who he is, or how great he is, or what he's written. Sooner or later he's going to flop and everybody who admired him will try to write him off as a bum. He can't help it. He's bound to write something bad. Shakespeare wrote a few bad plays. Tolstoy was turning out some pretty dreadful stuff at the end of his life. Name me one great writer who hasn't had some failure.

INTERVIEWERS

Yes, but aren't you judging failure on a pretty relative basis? Failure for Shakespeare or Tolstoy merely means something that doesn't measure up to the standard of his work. It's not the same thing as failure for a young writer starting on a career.

SHAW

Why isn't it? Failure was just as bitter for Tolstoy and Shakespeare during their lifetimes. Do you think they could comfort themselves with posterity? Or about measuring up to standards and that kind of business?

INTERVIEWERS

Well, what about success? Certainly that's beneficial to a writer?

SHAW

To a certain extent it is. But everybody forgets that a

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writer who has had success, even one who's made a lot of money on one book, may have waited fifteen years for that one book, and before he can produce another one, it may be another fifteen years, if ever. And I'm not only talking about commercial or critical failure. There's the kind of running failure that dogs a writer all his life—ideas that only get half-written, false beginnings, first drafts that suddenly go dead and have to be thrown away, even crucial paragraphs that stiffen under your hand and refuse to be revived. And then, whole books, even if they've been well-received, that nag you long after they've been published, because you see where you could have done something better with them. And then, American writers, more than any others, are haunted by the fear of failure, because it's such a common pattern in America. The ghost of Fitzgerald, dying in Hollywood, with his comeback book unfinished, and his best book, *Tender is the Night*, scorned—his ghost hangs over every American typewriter. An absolutely necessary part of a writer's equipment, almost as necessary as talent, is the ability to stand up under punishment, both the punishment the world hands out and the punishment he inflicts upon himself. If he doesn't have the faith in himself, the energy, the ambition, to shake it off or absorb it and plow ahead, he'll wind up a one-book man or a two-book man, and hitting the bottle instead of the typewriter. Failure is more consistent—for everybody—than success. It's like living in a rainy belt—there are some sunny days, but most of the time it's wet outside and you'd better carry your umbrella. Anyway, failure is apt to produce self-pity and it's been my experience that self-pity can be very productive.

* * *

INTERVIEWERS

Do you approve of rich wives for the struggling artist?

SHAW

I certainly do; largely because of the income tax situation. I can say this because I can swear that my wife is not now, nor has ever been, rich.

INTERVIEWERS

And how about writing for the movies?

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SHAW

It's not as good as a rich wife, but I think it only harms those writers who were bound to be harmed by something anyway. And you get an interesting technical exercise there—writing in handcuffs—which might one day be of considerable use in your own things.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think you have been embittered or disappointed by your experiences in Hollywood?

SHAW

On the contrary. When I first went out there at the age of twenty-three, I had no illusions at all. I was almost as cynical about Hollywood as you seem to be. Now after seeing all the good movies that have been made since then, against all obstacles, I have some hope for the movies, which is more than I started out with.

INTERVIEWERS

To get back to your early writing. There is considerable preoccupation with the rise of Hitler, with anti-Semitism in Europe, and with oncoming war generally. And yet, as a play, *Bury the Dead* was violently anti-war.

SHAW

That's right. I think the course of my writing during the thirties pretty well reflects what most of my generation was preoccupied with then. We began in the depression, very dedicated and oppressed and doom-conscious. In the early thirties we were against a new war at any cost. We believed that simply by protesting against war we could avoid it. We kept saying to ourselves "we won't fight again *ever* about anything." My play was produced in 1936 and the play that won the Pulitzer Prize for that year was Robert Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight*, and that was a fierce attack on munitions makers. Congress had just passed the Neutrality Bill and there was the Oxford Movement in England. So you can see...

INTERVIEWERS

Then what was it that began to change you? It didn't happen overnight, did it?

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SHAW

It took a little while I guess. We believed that people believed the same thing the world over, but what we didn't know or wouldn't believe was that in Germany and Italy and Russia people who thought as we did were being lined up against walls and machine-gunned. Then there was the civil war in Spain which had its great effect on us; that, plus the growth of Hitlerism and the persecution of the Jews, all of that business. At first it was too much for us to believe, but bit by bit we began believing it. I think I was recording in my short stories what we, our age, felt then. In almost everything I wrote, even these simple stories, little sketches really, of the young men and girls in New York, this thing was hanging like a backdrop. Even a simple story called *Search through the Streets of the City*, which was about a man who runs into a girl he once had an affair with, and finds she's married the wrong man, has an atmosphere of draft boards and headlines and impending disaster.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you think your writing since the war has the same preoccupation?

SHAW

Pretty much the same. We've lived in a sick world since 1914. It's no accident that Kafka has become so popular. He's enjoying the popularity of the prophet whose prophecies have come true. He prophesied the final emergence of the Victim as the arch-type of the modern man—the Victim who is slowly teased and tortured and destroyed by forces that are implacable and pitiless and that cannot be understood. And since we have to live in this atmosphere of perpetual doom, it's natural that it should permeate one's writing. War has now been taken out of all human contact. We can hardly conceive or bear to think of the faculties now achieved for mass destruction. This isn't even the kind of killing with regret, with compassion, that I tried to write about in *The Young Lions*.

INTERVIEWERS

There was a sermon in *The Young Lions*, given by an old pastor in the ruined church at Dover. That was important, then?

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SHAW

Yes, that was very important. I tried to have that old man say what my only belief is about war—not to be proud of the thousands of bombers you send against the enemy and their cities, of the blind, indiscriminate, million-quality of your killing, no matter how necessary you may think it is. And when a soldier kills another soldier, he must kill with a sense of sin and tragedy. The sin is as much the soldier's as it is of the enemy he kills by his hand, and that is the way a soldier loves his enemy, moved by a curious sense of sin that belongs to them both. That's probably the fundamental thing I tried to say in the novel.

INTERVIEWERS

Would you say it was kind of an obsession with you, this compassion? It seems to be in many of your later stories, particularly those about the war: in a story like *The Act of Faith*, for instance?

SHAW

It's something I believe in strongly.

INTERVIEWERS

But not an obsession?

SHAW

I don't know. I don't think I believe in obsessions. I don't agree with Graham Greene, if that's what you mean. I read what he said in your last issue about the writer's need to be obsessed. I admire Greene but there I disagree with him. Or disagree with him to the extent of the value he places on a *single* obsession. Writers, especially if they live long enough, can be gripped by different obsessions, or at the same time by several obsessions. For example—T. S. Eliot, if he was obsessed by anything in his great early work, was obsessed by a sense of revulsion and disgust with the modern world. Now he's obsessed with the idea of redemption through faith, and his work, as far as I'm concerned, has suffered because of it. I didn't like *The Cocktail Party* one bit. I thought it unworthy of him. I realize this isn't a fashionable theory, at least not among the critics.

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INTERVIEWERS

Back to the critics again?

SHAW

Well, it's what I've been telling you. They have to have a theory to peg you with and anything that doesn't fit that theory they tend to ignore. This business of obsession is another of their theories. Hemingway is supposed to be obsessed with violence. But it seems to me that Hemingway has done a lot of writing that couldn't be more tranquil. You remember the fishing scenes in *The Sun Also Rises* that were done about the Pyrénées, right out the window there (*he waved his bandage-encased hand, the size of a bear paw, at the mountains*). They're remarkable for the feeling they give of peace and nature and communion and friendship between two men who have gone fishing. But I've never heard it said that Hemingway was obsessed by friendship. What was Stendhal's obsession? To write sentences as clear as those in the Code Napoleon? Does that explain why *The Charterhouse of Palma* is a great novel? Every novelist has a different purpose—and often several purposes which might even be contradictory. For example, I find myself wanting to expose how bitter the world is and at the same time how glorious it is to live in it. You can't talk abstractly about the purpose of the novel. The novelist is a free agent, he can't be pinned down.

INTERVIEWERS

You were saying a while back about *The Troubled Air* that the best recourse of the honorable man who can think and is in such a situation is to resign. This applies particularly to the intellectual in America?

SHAW

Remember, I was writing about a particular man, a particular problem, and a particular atmosphere, which I hope is not going to remain unchanged. Still, for a long time, the intellectual in America has had at least socially and psychologically, a difficult time. In the thirties the communists were making their first big dent, and it was they who began to belittle the intellectuals in places like New York. They were joined by the violent right-wing newspapers who hated

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Roosevelt and expressed their contempt of the intellectuals by inventing such phrases as "The Brain Trust".

INTERVIEWERS

You'd say that the intellectual, and particularly the writer, is much better respected in Europe than in the States?

SHAW

Not in Europe, generally. Remember what happened to the intellectuals in Germany and in Russia. But in western Europe, yes. Look at François Mauriac, a Nobel prize winner and one of the best living French novelists, writing a column on anything he pleases, on politics or a play he's seen the night before, or a point of religious doctrine, twice a week which is published on the front page of *Figaro*, the biggest conservative paper in France. Can you imagine either one of our two living Nobel prize winners—Pearl Buck or William Faulkner, writing a column like that for the *New York Times*?

INTERVIEWERS

What is thought of the writer in America then?

SHAW

He's a freak. People feel uncomfortable when he's around. He has odd, inconsistent ways of making his living, and nine times out of ten he can't earn his living by writing. He's distrusted and maybe he's subversive. An American writer is always a potential witness for an investigating committee. Right now, the situation has worsened: at least in the thirties an occasional writer was asked to the White House. Now, attacking writers as among the most eggheaded of intellectuals is considered a good way of guaranteeing an election. I might mistrust intellectuals, but I'd mistrust nonintellectuals even more.

INTERVIEWERS

As a writer, what do you yourself consider the body of your work?

SHAW

That's hard to know. I think of myself, however, as a novelist. Once I've started writing a novel I seem to put everything else aside.

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INTERVIEWERS

You are often classed with the "new young novelists".

SHAW

It's those damn critics again. They only do that when they want to rap me. I'm older than the so-called "young novelists". John Hersey, for example, started writing in 1940, and by that time I'd written a great number of short stories and had had five plays on Broadway.

INTERVIEWERS

How much can a large work like a novel be systematically planned?

SHAW

I plan it very systematically, then find out that it changes enormously as I write it. I try to let it move me, at least for the first draft, step by step.

INTERVIEWERS

Are you writing a novel now? Could you say what it's about?

SHAW

I've been working on a novel off and on since last winter. I have about a hundred and fifty pages done, but I won't tell you about it. I think it's a bad idea to talk about what you're working on.

INTERVIEWERS

Can you tell us then something about the theater. Do you find it an easier medium than the novel?

SHAW

It's the hardest of them all. Young novelists come a dime a dozen, but the playwright must be older, more experienced and in more complete control of his craft. The scope of the novel is such that mistakes can be made, even serious mistakes, without impairing the value of the work. But the theater audience is hyper-critical, and the form of the play is extremely exacting and one mistake and you're through. I've had a hard time with the theater. I've always been anxious to write plays. I read all kinds of plays and books on the theater and books about how to write plays but all I

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learned was that playwriting is something nobody can teach you.

INTERVIEWERS

But your first success *Bury the Dead* came when you were twenty-three years old. You learned pretty fast.

SHAW

Look, I wrote five plays before *Bury the Dead.* They were all bad and I didn't show them to anybody. I had to write them to practice, and that's the way I learned. Since *Bury the Dead,* I've written seven plays, all but *The Gentle People* flops. I like the theater as a form, but I'm not so sure about its being the right one for me. You never can tell what's going to happen. My play *The Gentle People* was translated into French and produced in Paris, last winter, fifteen years after it was done at home. It was perhaps the greatest theatrical success I've had. They called it *Phillipe et Jonas* and the French appreciated it as I meant it to be: a combination fairy-tale and joke. In New York it was accepted by critics and audiences alike as a head-on melodrama.

INTERVIEWERS

You don't seem to have much regard for the New York theater audience.

SHAW

Oh, but I do. I have a fine play in mind I'll write for them some day. The curtain slides up on a stage bare except for a machine gun facing the audience. Then after a pause in which the audience is given time to rustle their paper bags and their programs, wheeze and cough and settle in their seats, the actor enters. He's a tall man dressed in evening clothes. He comes downstage to the footlights and after a little bow smiles charmingly at the audience, giving them more time to mumble and rustle and cough and whisper and settle in their seats. Then he walks upstage, adjusts the machine gun and blasts them.

INTERVIEWERS

Oh, yes... Perhaps we ought to move on to the short story. What about the technique of the short story?

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SHAW

Well, that's something I've been thinking about for twenty-five years and I'm not sure. The form of the short story is so free as to escape restriction to any theory. Theories just don't seem to hold up. I had a theory when I began and I know I haven't been able to follow it out.

INTERVIEWERS

What was that?

SHAW

I wanted to write stories in each one of which the style and shape would be dictated, as far as possible, not by me but by the material itself. That is, I wanted to make the attempt to cut the umbilical cord between the creator and the character. The Promethean writer would be the one who sounded like a Russian artillery officer when he was writing *The Cossacks*, a Dublin lush when he was writing *Counterparts*, and a German professor when he was writing *Disorder and Early Sorrow*. I know it's impossible, but some damned interesting writing might come out of the attempt.

INTERVIEWERS

Where do you get your ideas for your short stories?

SHAW

All over. Watching, listening, remembering. A lot of them from my friends or people I meet. Sometimes from a general feeling or belief which is strong enough to make me invent characters and situations to state it. For example, my story *The Eighty-Yard Run* which was about an ex-football player, a minor hero, who turns into a complete failure by the age of 35, came as a result of my seeing around me so many men, all of whose best moments had come in their youth. I wanted to express that and show the subtle disappointments and inadequacies which bring so many promising young men to failure so early. Americans are at their best in their youth, and for me, at least, nothing is more characteristic of that best side and best moment of Americans than the race down the football field under a kickoff, in which are mingled gaiety, grace, recklessness, good-humored ferocity, skill at high speed, all taking place in a particular at-

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mosphere of health and holiday that is duplicated nowhere else in the world. It was a productive symbol both for me and for the reader and I built my story around the feelings of past joy and present regret that remembering it gave me.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you write your stories immediately after you hear them or think of them?

SHAW

No. I have to wait to get the story in proper perspective. I've been working now on a story I've been carrying around in my head since August 1944.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you keep a notebook?

SHAW

Yes, I do. I take a great many notes. If I have an idea for a short story I jot it down. Now look, haven't you fellows got enough? I don't see what good these damn interviews are anyway. All this has been said before. Conceivably, writing can still be original, but talking or writing *about* writing can't. Holy Man, I want to play some tennis.

INTERVIEWERS

You going to play tennis with that hand?

SHAW

Damn right. Funny thing about this hand of mine. I usually work on a typewriter. Can't of course with this hand, and the funny thing is that I've been reading Proust for two weeks and I find this pen I'm using writes the longest Proustian sentences you ever saw. I can't seem to do anything about it.

INTERVIEWERS

One more thing. Would you happen to have a photograph of yourself lying about? We'll have an artist do a line-sketch off it to preface the interview.

SHAW

I suppose there's one. I take terrible pictures. I wish I was vain enough not to have any more taken and call in all

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those that are still out. You know, a woman was speaking to me the other day about a photograph she'd seen of me. You know what she said to me? She said to me, "My, now that I've seen you, that photograph must have been taken when you were much older, Mr. Shaw, much older."

—John Phillips
George Plimpton

(This is the fourth in a series on the Art of Fiction. Authors interviewed have included E. M. Forster, François Mauriac, and Graham Greene. Future interviews will be held with William Styron, Ernest Hemingway, and Joyce Cary.)

POEM

Supremest fictions grow with fungus speed,
The drunk by lies, the diver knows by art
The blurry wrecks made fairy-tale with weed.

Soon sight confounds the truth-germ in the heart
With a new myth matured with novel ease
From unlived histories which do not smart.

The germ divides, the fictions lunge and squeeze
Into the breach pronounced by this decision,
The duplicating halves of truth they seize.

Now is forever fable in the vision,
The figures changing every time we check,
The fate which gives safe sale provides collision;

We plunge for vessel and we find the wreck,
A shell and loss before invention sees
The unexpected Angel on its deck.

—Arthur Boyars

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THE SUN AND THE STILL-BORN STARS

SID Peckham and his wife were coast farmers and Sid was a veteran of World War II. They were eeking out the narrowest sort of existence on a little plot of ground just east of Corpus Christi, about an eighth of a mile from the Gulf.

The cost of their farm was two hundred dollars. For one reason or another Sid had not been able to get a G.I. loan to buy the land outright, but he and Sarah had scraped together enough money for the down payment. Now, to meet the quarterly instalments of twenty-five dollars, they depended entirely upon what could be raised there and sold for the vegetable markets of Corpus Christi, namely soft melons and squash.

Sid and Sarah were of a line of unimaginative, one-acre

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farmers who very often had not owned the land they worked, and whose life's spring was less connected to the proverbial love of the land than twisted somehow around a vague acceptance of work, God's will and the hopeless, unsurprising emptiness of life. The only book in their little house was the Bible, which they never read.

For a time, before the war, they had lived on the even smaller farm of Sarah's father, sharing a little room in the back and working most of the day in the melon patch. Then Sid was gone, in the Army, for three years.

They had one letter from France, but for all it said of what was happening it could have been written from Fly, two miles away, or even from his own family's place across the road.

Dear Sari

They told us all to write. Hope you are all well. I am fine. The place here and the food is all right. Rain yesterday here, and today. I hope you and the family are all right.

God keep you.

Sid Peckham

In other respects, the letter was an epitome of their relationship. Speech between them was empty and hushed.

Only sometimes now Sid spoke of the *films* he had seen in the Army. Then he was more expressive than at any other time.

"That one were right good," he would say, "I seen it on the boat."

Sarah would listen. They had never gone to see films before. But since the war, every Saturday they walked the two miles into Fly for the new movie. The movie in Fly played once on Saturday night and once again on Tuesday afternoon. Sid and Sarah went to the Saturday night showing, and they always left the house well before sundown in order to get good seats. All the seats were the same price, fifteen cents. They saw comedies and mysteries, westerns, dramas, and classic histories, one a week for seven years.

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In the darkened cinema their faces were like a single wooden mask. Sometimes Sarah had difficulty in grasping the mood of a film at all. Then she would try to take her cue from Sid, leaning out to turn and peer at his face. But it never told her anything, and as soon as he noticed he would push her away again back down into her own seat.

Only, if Sid had seen the film before, Sarah might watch him from the side, how he covered his mouth and clucked from time to time, nodding his head at the screen. The way this happened though, it never failed to strike Sarah as being different from what was happening at the same instant on the screen. And Sarah's brow would sometimes go all dark furrowed, and she might draw her stiff fingers back and forth over the palm of her hand.

Later in the moonlight, on the narrow dirt road as they walked back to their place, Sarah would walk a little behind Sid and stare at the back of his head. Or else she might shoot a furtive, intent look at him from the side.

"Nice film weren't it, Sid?"

"It weren't a bad film," Sid would say, and after a moment, "I seen it before now. I seen it in *Englelan*."

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Sid Peckham had picked up one or two expressions in England. One of them was "piping" for hot, or more often to augment hotness. Only he had distorted it to "piper", so that now they sometimes referred to the coffee of a morning as being "piper hot". Or if Sarah simply asked, "How does this soup taste to you, Sid?" Sid might say, "It's a right good soup, it's piper hot."

But somewhere behind this, the mask of each expressed life, deep under the dead wooden simplicity of their ever separate, unspoken awareness, little things were crawling alive, breeding and taking on great, secret shape.

During the day their labor was equally divided, until at last one Friday when Sarah was in the sixth month of her first pregnancy, it fell upon Sid to do most of the work in the patch. For her part, Sarah wondered if now, with the coming expense of the child, they would continue to go into Fly on Saturday for the movie. For they had never, above the quarterly payments on the land, had money to spare at the time the payments were made. And moreover, with Sid working the patch alone, it was difficult to see how they would meet the next payment at all.

Saturday, and Sarah awoke from a dreamless sleep, in a summer darkness long before dawn. At waking, this darkness was pure, and except for the night wind, perfectly still. She sought, but no notion of time could form in her mind, and she knew as soon that beneath the swift softness of the wind the night was alive with sound.

She was very still, her head straight against the flat cotton mattress. And as out from the ceiling center, where the untrained vision lay, the room grew, like an image on a screen, slowly down around her to a vague, somehow familiar definition, she knew that he was awake too, and she touched his shoulder.

"What's that noise, Sid?"

"It's somethin' in the patch," he said without moving.

A dry electric rustling filled the room. They lay still for another moment as the rustling stopped, then started up again, and Sid got stiffly out of bed and went to the window.

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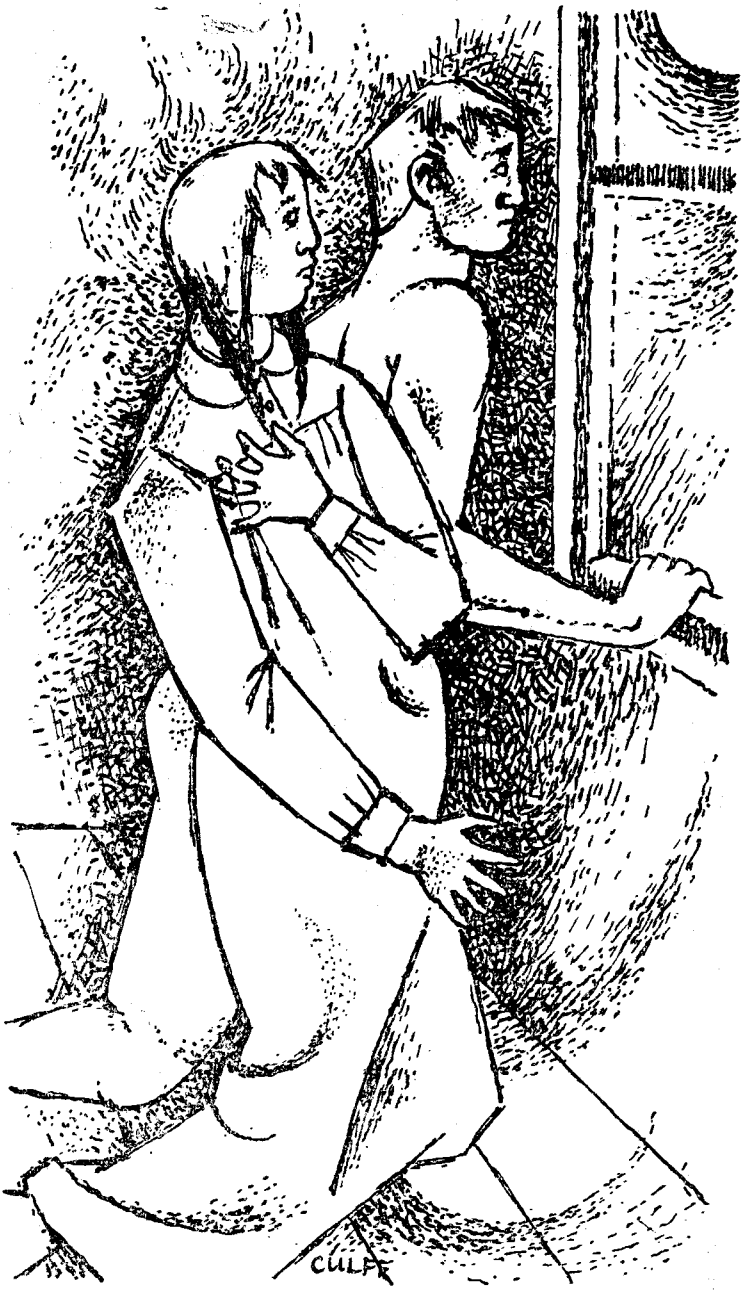

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"What is it?" asked Sarah. Sitting up now she could see Sid looking steadily out the window, but from the side, with his back almost flat against the wall. Then he was all crouched down, so that his eyes seemed at the level of the sill, peering out across the patch.

Sarah left the bed and knelt beside him. At the window the sounds were not the same as before. There was a scratching, a dry tinsel sound. Leaf against leaf, and leaf against vine. And these were of the night, but in the heart of the patch where the dark form lay moving, just there, were the different sounds, the heavy, wetmouth breaking of melons, and the sound of breathing. And while the rustling of the leaf and vine stopped, the breathing went on. Yet somehow heard by Sarah as indistinct so that she shook her head and turned it first this way and then that, out against the night and at last even to peer into Sid's face.

"Where, Sid?" she asked, "what is it?" because she saw that his eyes stared straight unblinking into the dark.

"It's an animal I reckon," said Sid. He stood up slowly and took his clothes off the chair. "I reckon it's a hog."

Sarah stayed hunched at the sill, looking out the window and back at Sid as he put on his clothes.

"It's bigger than a hog." she said.

"I know it," said Sid.

In the room she saw his back as he left the door, and at once out the window how he appeared at the corner of the house, a shadow in the darkness, creeping along the fence of the patch. Opposite the window he stopped, crouched peering out over the patch. And where the heavier shadow lay, there was nothing now except the still night, and the breathing.

Then Sarah saw Sid rise, holding a large white rock. And she put out her hand, for in this light she saw him as though a film of oil lay stretched across the window. But in a sudden bound he was over the fence, throwing the stone and rushing ahead, as to Sarah at the window the two sounds were joined in a loud tearing sound of the breaking leaf and vine. And as quickly the single shape was split, formed and reformed, and was lost twisting down through the darkness.

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She stayed at the window while the sounds broke away, dying across the patch, down toward the sea. Then she went to bed.

Sometime after sunrise she awoke again, and was still alone in the room. When she was up and dressed, she made the bed and began to sweep the floor; but once, near the window, she stopped and stood there, staring out over the land. Across the piece of yard to the fence, over the patch, and beyond the field, lay the dim sea, rising back high against the morning, and nothing stirred, but the brilliant shooting patterns of the sun, moving out across the land.

Sarah fixed the breakfast and Sid had not returned. Then she went out into the patch and chopped weeds until she was sick. She was lying on the bed when Sid came in at almost noon. His clothes were wet and torn; there were short deep cuts on his face.

"What is it, Sid?"

For a moment he stood motionless in the doorway.

"It was a hog," he said then, "a sea-hog."

Sarah waited.

"I druv it back into the water," said Sid. And he took off his clothes and lay down.

In the late afternoon he awoke and got up hurriedly. Out in the patch he worked in a frenzy for two hours. Then he sat down on the back steps.

In the kitchen, mending the torn clothes, Sarah saw his head turned away from the setting sun, and always south to the sea.

After supper they went straight to bed and Sarah didn't wake until light. He was gone.

She got up and dressed. Instead of fixing the breakfast, she took the hoe from the back steps and went to work in the patch. By mid-morning she could no longer feel her arms and shoulders. She tried to straighten up and something moved through her back like a burning coal.

She sat on the steps with her face in her arms. Much later, she got up, and under the hot sun walked down through the patch and the field toward the sea. Above the throbbing

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heat of noon she could hear ahead the constant play of the surf, and something more when she began to climb the dunes. But when she reached the top of the dune and looked down onto the vast mirrored surf below, she saw that he stood alone, in apparent dead fatigue, and Sarah could only follow the dull sweep of his eyes on the retreating darkness in the water.

She lay on the dune for a while after Sid left the beach, plodding past her, back up across the field toward the patch and the house.

When Sarah reached the house, Sid was asleep. He slept into the afternoon, then he went out into the patch with his hoe. She saw as he passed how his mouth was fixed straight, like the breaking length of a black string. After an hour, he was sitting on the back steps.

From her chair at the kitchen table Sarah watched Sid with his pocket-knife whittle off the handle of the hoe. He spent the rest of the afternoon there on the steps, sharpening the end of the hoe handle with his knife, so that finally what was left of the hoe was a sharp-pointed, hardwood spear about three feet long. Then he went to bed.

And Sarah followed. She lay in bed, her eyes opened, turning ever again from where the ceiling spread above them like a veil to Sid's face and back, and back again. Night. Night and the image of night.

She did not awake until late.

***

The land on the Gulf between Corpus Christi and Fly is a flat burning waste, with only the most gradual rise of dune above the surf.

At the still blaze of noon, there is a wildness here in the heat and light, and atop the dunes the air is overhung with a sound like water beating against some distant cliff but this is the sound of the sun, which strikes and rises from the dead sand in black lined waves.

As Sarah climbed, crawling, she stopped, feeling the rise of sound and light, turned herself, her eyes, straight into the

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panic sun, and she slowly stood, her eyes strained to blackness. But then she was there, on the crest of the highest dune where she dropped to her knees at the sight of the endless sea stretched shorewise in an explosion of light. And below, deep in the burning surf, Sid Peckham fought for his life.

Sarah lay on the dune, half dazed by the flat crystal brilliance of the scene below as the two bodies heaved and pitched together in some heavy soundless purpose. Now one, now the other in ascendancy, they fell and rose, threshing, their rage a slowly desperate waltz.

Here from high atop the dune, she heard the muted scream and saw the lunge in the surf below, how the two fell grappling beneath the water, then rose wavering, fixed in heavy changing arcs of strength, leaning now toward the sea, now toward the land, but always flat under the burning sun. They gave no quarter except to fatigue till one beating arc wavered and fell, in favor of sea or shore.

And then to Sarah the battle seemed locked like a poised weight, and she sprang up from the dune and rushed down to the sea. The hardwood spear stood jutting aslant from the sand below the surf, and as the girl threw herself between them she wrenched the spear from the sand, and turning its point from shore to sea and back, and back again, all her knowing was struck dim by the terrible flux of weight, balance, and change, her eyes blind to the tearing sun. Great cloud head image on the silver screen, the approach and retreat, *approach and retreat*, the growing approach, approach, approach, flat huge swelling on the silver screen, uncontained growing, swelling, swelling swelling swelling to a scream.

"Stop."

Lilt. And the white surf around them feathered out all rose and pink, their motion faded to an end as gradual and even as the close of slow music.

For a long while Sarah stood in the surf seeing only where the water broke silver and red around the upright spear. Then she drew out the spear and facing the sea, she felt the tremor beneath her feet as the weight was dragged away along the sand, under the water. And she was alone.

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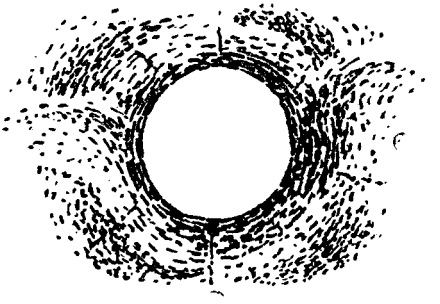
Back at the house she worked in the patch until night, then she went to bed. Before dawn she awoke, while the moon was still high and there was no sound except the stirring of the night wind. But beyond the patch and past the field, from down at the sea, she could hear something like the surf on rock cliffs, and above this, the listening that came up through the night.

She got out of bed and dressed, walked through the kitchen and out the door. Near the back steps, struck straight in the ground was the hoe handle that had been fashioned into a spear. Sarah would know as she passed, from the way the shadow fell under the moon, just how early or late the morning was.

She crossed the patch and was into the field before she could remember and touch the pocket of her thin dress. There were two coins there: a nickel and a quarter. She stiffened a little and stood still, holding the coins in her hand. A small cloud passed under the moon, and for an instant on the left the dirt road to Fly was only a twisting shadow. Then the cloud was gone. The road to Fly was clear. And as she moved to the point beyond, where the road met the field, she knew that it was all right too, the man who sold the tickets would give her the change himself.



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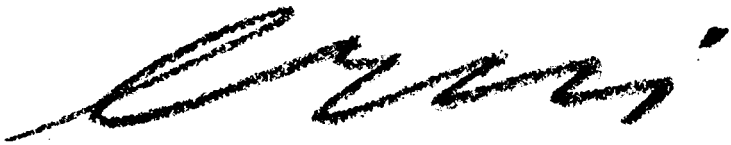

HANS ERNI came to Paris from his native Switzerland in 1927 to study architecture. He dropped his studies in favor of painting and gave to the art world his prodigious ability as a draughtsman coupled with a furious pace of production. Now, forty-four years of age he has exhibited in every major capital of Europe, from London to Prague. At the present time he has three exhibitions running simultaneously, in Chicago, Copenhagen, and in Paris, at the Kléber Galleries. Equally gifted in tempera, oils, etchings, lithographs, and pastels, Erni continues to work on such varied projects as illustrations for Jules Renard's *Histoires Naturelles*, oil paintings and lithograph posters. He was once a junior ski champion in Switzerland, and on his occasional visits to Lucerne plays on its field hockey team, but in his Paris studio, where he paints in an old gym suit, he only finds time for an occasional swim in a year of work.

In the twenties and thirties Erni was involved with the Picasso-Braque group, a member of the *Abstraction-Creation* school, and a friend of Calder, Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Moore. Picasso has remained the major influence on Erni's work, not the modern Picasso but the artist of the Blue and Rose periods. Erni admires Picasso's contemporary work, but his interest is in reality rather than its deformation. He is a believer in functional art, that is to say, an art form which has its influence on the individual and the group, and draws its vitality from them. It has been said of Erni that he is "one of those who may save the brilliant promise of modernism from the disintegration that threatens it."

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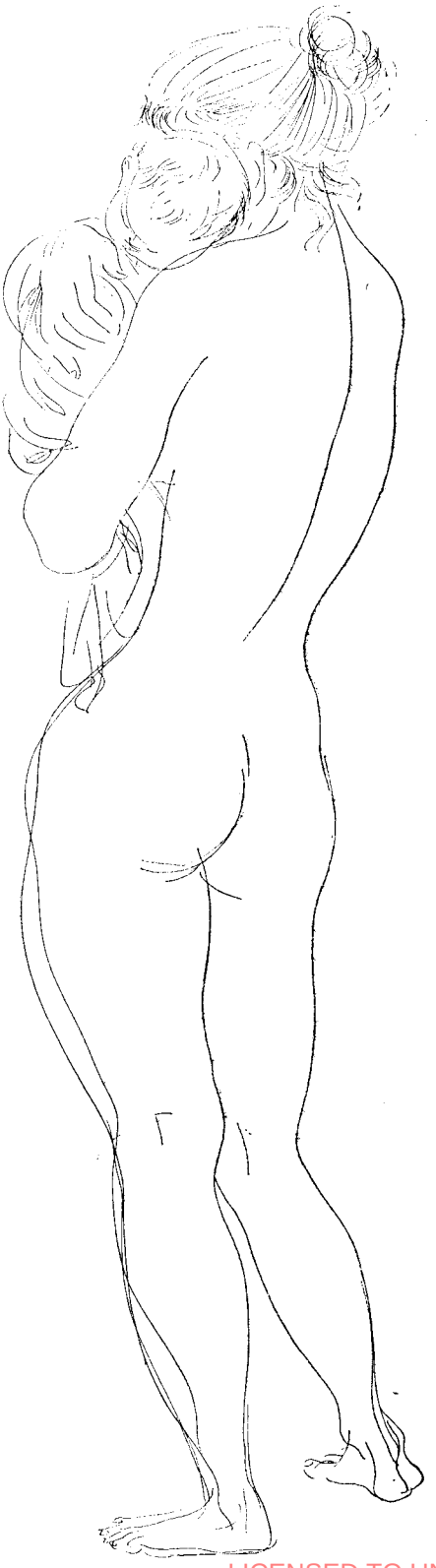

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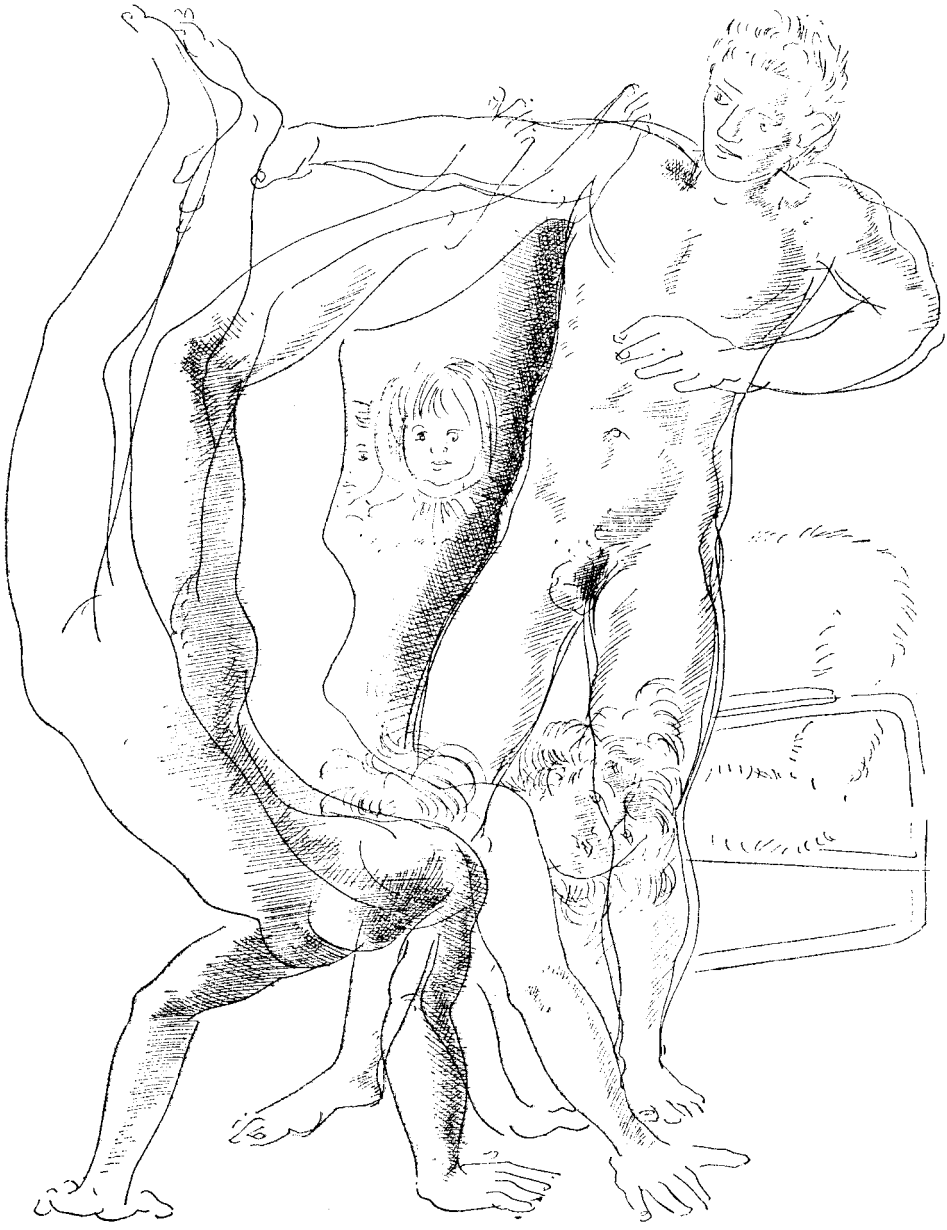

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ZYGMUNT HAUPT

IN PARIS AND IN ARCADIA

IN the inside pocket of my coat, in a compartment of my much-used wallet I treasured a check for 500 francs nicely folded in four. From my looking at it so often to assure myself it was still there, the check had become a little crumpled and yellowish, but it had its full value. This check was a kind of magic passport for me, a safe guarantee of my return. It would then be a diploma, also, for the failure of my life's dream, for my surrender in the conquering of the world...

Perhaps I sat in the Jardin des Plantes and the shadows of the plane trees were around me and the gravel of the path crunched under the feet of provincials, tired of Paris and the heat and waiting for the hour of déjeuner. Behind the wire fence a mangy, shedding antelope gnu scratched itself on a dusty little tree, business-like gold and red and indigo-feathered ducks toddled on their awkward legs, and delicate pink flamingoes stilted gravely in the shallow water of the garden lake. Behind me were the walls of the anthropological museum where scores of thousands of numbered yellow skulls were arranged on shelves in the monotonous pattern of the Capucine catacombs in Naples. In the air seemed to float the faint and thin and far-away fragrance of old wine-casks in the Halles des Vins.

Or perhaps when I reached the Porte d'Orleans by Metro I ventured a little further, where the Paris beyond was carved out as if by a knife, "Octrois de Paris", a city built of orange crates, skins, fags, and cardboard, without streets, without sewers, without lights, no man's land, Shanghai, Marakesh of dirt, Chinatown of exotics, no man's land between the prosperous and the rest of the world.

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Or perhaps when I was bored and depressed, I wandered to the Slavonic Institute in the rue Michelet, where I could read old Polish newspapers or argue with the Ukrainian from Lwow, who, hollow-cheeked from hunger, with his sarcastic smile, assured me... "and your problem of Poles in the Western Ukraine? It is not a problem—we will cut your throats..." and he would borrow 70 centimes for the Metro fare.

Or perhaps I walked along the Boulevards, through the dense evening crowds, bumping into the little tables of the sidewalk cafes, stopping before the windows of exclusive jewellers with fantastic names like "KEPTA", and *kepta* in my country meant weeds, greens which the peasant woman cuts with her sickle at dawn or at twilight to provide fodder for the impatient cow she will milk, but *kepta* here means glass and nickel-plated frames of a jeweller's window with a diamond necklace and two strings of pearls on pink velvet.

Once I boarded the Metro near the Gare de Lyon. The door slammed and the train rolled through the tunnel. Beside me sat a young couple embracing each other against the orange light of the lamp and examining in this orange light the negatives of a film. Perhaps caught enchanted in the emulsion were past times of their amateur happiness. They raised their eyes to the light as if praying to this past, seeing in the black and white shadows what it had been. I got out near Chatelet and wandered along the quays of the right bank of the Seine, by innumerable shops with cages of animals, birds, canaries, parrots and the packets of their food—the ornithologists lost in thought, and a French soldier with his musette bag on his shoulder contemplating the exotic pheasants, parrots and thrushes exposed to the sun in their cages as if in medieval pillories. Carefree mongrel pups played in the dust of the sidewalk. Paris was quiet.

***

High up in my room I was in my solitary world of crooked walls and loose wallpaper in the attic, with water dripping

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from the leaky tap into the washstand, the floor oddly aslant, with red tiles showing through the much-used linoleum. The window opened into the narrow throat of the street, with its strange Parisian smell of hot tire rubber and wine, and even up here the melody, the music of the accordion and the voices of the people drinking in the small bistro penetrated the room.

I listened to the chimes of the church of St. Etienne du Mont rolling into space, the cascades and tinkles striking quarters and full hours. They chimed courantes and trills and jingled into my room like convict fetters, and ricocheting from the crooked walls hammered my temples like brass mallets. I pressed hard on my eyelids and then the advertisements and the big letters of posters I had seen on my walks marched through my brain in formation, elongated like bayonets, swaying forth like the points of bayonets carried by infantry. When the chimes stop, I can hear the faint and glassy bubbles of water running from the loose tap like the fountains in Persian gardens, thin and glassy.

When I can't sleep, I help myself by recalling how it was when the infantry was marching... remembrance... far away... and in the end I fall asleep...

***

A column of infantry was marching on the road in the dust and heat of summer. The people brought out pails of water, putting them by the road, and the marching soldiers dipped from the pails or sometimes one just put a whole pail to his mouth and you could see how his throat worked, gulping it, and the red skin of his face sweating in dirty trickles down the dusty collar of his uniform.

When the army passed on the road, not only we children but the grown-ups also ran to the road and looked; in spite of the years of war which dragged on and in spite of many armies from all over the world passing across this country we ran to the road and looked. Probably it was a kind of escape from the monotony of every day or maybe people thought that with the dust raised from the roads and lying on the fences, on the

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leaves of the trees, on the weeds, with the dust storm of the world which dragged a red veil over the sun, that with it would come the new and unexpected life, and that is why they ran to the road and looked.

A long column of infantry marched by, not in step, the soldiers with heavy dragging gait, limping under their haphazard collection of equipment, their caps on the backs of their heads, occasionally one of them with a French or German steel helmet. You could see among them a few Ukrainian prisoners of war, also dusty and in rags, carrying on their shoulders light machine-guns or boxes of ammunition.

And the Russian infantry went in heavy swells on the gray muddy road, marching mixed in threes, in rusty long overcoats with their blankets rolled over their shoulders into the letter O, to which were attached their red copper canteens. They also had their kitbags and part of their tents folded and stretched over their shoulders, and rifles... a fence, a forest of rifles with their triangular slings, the bayonets, bayonets, bayonets; looking out from their march, tired, without interest at the people, they passed by, never to be seen here again. And after this company a new company and a new company.

And behind the infantry there were the trains, two-wheeled covered carts, regulation military wagons, and mixed with them peasants' carts from all over the world, the very high (odd for us) *tarantas* from Russia with their boxes painted in flowers and the horse in shafts and the round arc of the "duga", and the other horse to match him, the harness made of yellow rawhide tied in knots, and the drivers in Russian caps and colored cotton shirts; or just our peasants' carts requisitioned from the neighboring county, the angular backs of the horses tragic and painful in their pathetic bend as they dragged the squeaking carts with the foreign war equipment westward and westward.

And after them, infantry again and the slant forest of bayonets under the gray autumnal sky, and the mud flowing down the ditches, sticking to men's boots and to the spokes and tires of the cart wheels.

And the German infantry marched eastward in the heat of

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summer, loaded with equipment, the Mauser rifles hung in front on their necks and held with one hand, short jackboots and baggy *feldgrau* uniforms, the Bavarian regiments with the crown on their oxidized olive-colored buttons, their belts, heavy with ammunition, hanging in hooks sewn in over their hips. And trench tools tied together with the bayonets and the belts clasped with buckles on which in a round circle was stamped "*Gott mit uns*", pathetic and blasphemous inscription, and their steel helmets with heavy visors, like the helmets that the *Landsknechts* wear in Dürer engravings.

This company stopped and had a rest. They fell heavily into the ditch, into the dusty grass of the wayside, some of them with the German inclination to exhibitionism unbuttoned and took off their tunics and shirts, showing their white and pink German bodies. One of them, a young boy with short cropped hair and white eyelashes, had red stripes on the skin of his shoulders from the halter of his knapsack. We stood at the gate of the house, and I said boastfully to my mother, "Mama, I too will be a soldier when I am grown-up..." And the German, who maybe understood or maybe felt the meaning from the intonation, protested, impatient and disgusted, "*Ne... Ne...*" and afterwards it was a family story how I was eager to be a soldier and how this German perfidiously protested.

When the infantry passed by in parade step or marched stubbornly but not so orderly, we ran to the road and looked. The picket fences of the houses had vanished a long time ago, torn down and carried away by bivouacking armies; thus our lines of protection were gone, and the people looked lifelessly at the passing armies, looked without enthusiasm but also without the rage of the first days of the war, when they cursed, "I hope the first bullet gets you..."

I remember how the pathetic and drastic episodes of war mingled together with the boredom and tranquility of our little town. In the square a company was resting. One of the soldiers stood leaning against the wall and played something very joyful on his harmonica, and two others, in spite of the fact that they were tired and still had their equipment on,

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tramped heavily with their boots, imitating a dance which was itself an ironical mockery of bravado. Two others were reloading the belts of the machine guns. One of them squatted beside a Ukrainian prisoner lying on the grass, and arranged a very one-sided transaction. He got a tobacco pouch out of his pocket and asked the prisoner to show his own. The prisoner's tobacco pouch in its triviality and cheapness was still of a little better manufacture; it even had a portrait of a girl executed on it. Then there followed a forced exchange, and it was so logical and natural and obvious in these circumstances that I couldn't see in the eyes of the prisoner a trace of regret.

In our garden, our Orthodox priest, Czmola, hid among the raspberry bushes. He was big, this Czmola, and he was a friend of my father, mostly because my father had an old feud with the Roman Catholic prelate, Kunaszowski, so that for many years they didn't recognize each other. Just after my birth, when I was *in articulo mortis* because of the country midwife's clumsiness, my father called this Czmola to baptize me. Therefore this friendship.

Father Czmola belonged to the so-called Old Ruthenians, who were bitter adversaries of the Galician nationalist Ukrainians or what the others called Western Ukrainians or Ukrainian Piedmontes. In spite of his enormous stature and bull neck, Father Czmola was always full of fears and apprehensions.

Impelled by these apprehensions, when infantry was marching past he took to hiding in our garden, as if he were responsible for the pyromaniacal Demiurge which was setting the world afire. Big and broad-shouldered and red in the face, in his thread-bare cassock where the button-holes for the little buttons over his belly were worn to white threads, puffing, with a glint of fear and guilt in his eyes, he asked me in a loud whisper to notify my mother, and then retired into the darkness of the night.

I, too, was filled with awe and guilt, as the companies and battalions of different armies moved along the great highway, the Austrian *Landstürm* regiments with their calfskin knap-

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sacks, the Siberian Rifles in their long, muddy greatcoats and fur caps, squadrons of Uhlans in their red riding-breeches, with horsehair decoration on their shakos (the Uhlans were black-haired Bosnians and they cursed obscenely). During the retreat one of these Uhlans, wounded and covered with dust, sat on the steps of our house, and all the blood of his face drained away and drenched his red trousers. You couldn't see it until they took him away, but then on the threshold of our house there was a red stain which couldn't be scrubbed off. They tried for a month and they couldn't scrub it off.

And the Don Cossacks with the red stripes on the side of their trousers, dragging their sabres after them in wooden sheaths covered with black patent leather; they tied their horses to the apple trees in our garden, and the bark of the trees was eaten away until the pink trunk itself showed. The bark never grew back afterwards; the trunks of the trees remained naked and black, as if leprous, a souvenir of the war. The Cossacks hushed their horses' squealing and biting with "Whoa! Whoa!" when they fed them the corn stalks cut with their sabres in our garden.

And the German Death Hussars had their shakos adorned with the shiny skull and bones, big as a fist, the badge of the *Totenhusaren*. They had automatic pistols in wooden holsters and their shakos were covered with a camouflage cover and all metal parts of their equipment were oxidized. Their horses were half-breeds. This German cavalry, these gaunt, small men on their cowardly patrols bullied the defenseless and frightened peasants, and were the worst type of marauders on the periphery of the war, knocking out the teeth of quiet toilers with the butts of their Mausers, gobbling badly plucked roasted fowl, and with their bitter sadistic grins mocking at humanity.

In addition to all these there were innumerable commissary trains, artillery, pontoons on wheels, field hospitals, étapes, the smell dragging after the columns, the rusted empty tins on the camping grounds, the half rotten fabric of tents, empty ammunition boxes, garbage in the place where the field

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kitchen had been, abattoirs, field bakeries, blood-stained cotton, and dumps of the field hospitals, rags, horse dung, and straw, "Tankstelle", "ETAPENKOMMANDO", pistol lanyards from the necks of military gendarmerie, the covered Packard trucks, all dragging from horizon to horizon on the highway, the highway lined with cherry trees and telegraph poles, the rifles in stacks, and in winter the hooded sentinels with bayonets, the Russian hospital nurses, gold-braided épaulettes of Viennese cavalry gigolos, and the white belts and rosettes on the heart-shaped calves of the Russian dragoon guards' high boots, and, on the field behind the Jewish cemetery, shaking on the thin wheels of its undercarriage, in its cobweb of wire stretchers, a biplane, a Farman, the Russian pilots in their leather overalls and padded helmets, and the wounded in their hospital gowns smoking their cigarettes, and the stumps, and Kirgises, and the Russian soldiers with red cockades on their forage caps during the revolutionary mass meetings.

But all this was screened by the dust raised from the road by passing infantry.

Then Father Czmola would sneak into our garden and hide himself among raspberry bushes. Afterwards, when I grew up and read psychology, it seemed more clear that ironic nature makes such jokes, that the big and stout will be afraid and the small and meek will show in trouble a grand spirit.

Then, at the very end, during our own civil war, our own infantry appeared. There wasn't even middle-class enthusiasm for the little silver bird sitting on its baroque cartouche, the normalized device on their caps. But we children, we had a new holiday and a new escape from the monotony of the little place.

It was a still night when they brought this civil war to our vicinity. In the evening we sat on our porch steps and the frogs were singing in the pond, the long staccato of a machine gun mixing with their song, the long staccato and after it a long echo sounding along the walls of the forest and again the staccato and again the echo at the edge of the forest. Then

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came the report of a gun and far away the detonation and again the gun, and we counted—during the night we counted fifty-one shots. It was poor, this civil war, and they hadn't much ammunition. There was a single Ukrainian howitzer set up by the railway station. My father buckled over his coat a belt with an Austrian automatic pistol attached to it which someone had brought him from the Italian front, and before dawn he enthusiastically led the advance line across the vegetable gardens, showing the way to the station where this howitzer was. My mother had a headache, she was anxious about him, but we children were delighted with the infantry.

Just in front of the church, an iron railing surrounded the figure of St. Roch, a dog licking his knees; it had been erected there after an epidemic of smallpox, a long time ago probably, for exposure had caused the Saint to look as if he had suffered the disease himself. On this iron railing hung the corpse of a spy, hooked under the armpits, with his shirt stripped off and his trousers down to the groin, shot by a firing squad two days before. On his breast was a piece of cardboard to inform passers-by with its clumsy inscription "Spy". His protruding chest, with ribs like the body of Christ in crucifixion, had a few black and dried bullet holes on which had gathered green and gluttonous flies.

Every day of this war my father went to his bank, though there was nothing to do. Behind his back a half-opened safe ostentatiously showed the emptiness of the gray-painted inside. After his return home nothing interrupted his dreams, even in the Rowlandson-like interior of the only room left to us after the army's requisitioning, even with the children, household utensils and the impossibly overheated tiled stove. My father used to lean his back against the stove, toasting his shoulder blades and fixing his eyes through the window on the narrow winter horizon.

But now it was his day. He returned from his expedition with the skirmishers to the railway station. They had taken the howitzer. He slung a rifle on his arm, secured my sister and me by the hand, and we paraded through the village.

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Everybody saw us and the revolver on his belt buckled on over his coat.

One thing spoiled his morning of victories and successes. While we were parading, my sister toddling on his other side pointed to a little man in a side street and remarked, "Look, father, there goes Mr. Burak who doesn't pay his interest..." My father was displeased with this remark. "You have ruined my day," he said to my innocent sister.

It happened that the day was ruined, but not by my sister. The battalion of infantry, exposed too far, had to fall to the rear. Hastily they loaded the peasant carts with the seriously wounded and from across the other side of the mill pond you could hear the machine gun. My father was so threatened that there was nothing else for him to do but run away to the west. But our daily routine didn't change much. The chickens still scratched in the sunny yard: you could hear my sister practicing on the piano under the instruction of Miss Janka Cholodecka. My mother in spite of her headache remembered to prepare some sandwiches for my father. My father thought he'd better give us some warnings before his departure. He asked me to call my sister, and began with how "we shouldn't trouble our mother, and we were to remain here not for a spree but for an unhappy time..." Then he couldn't finish because of the intensive fire on the dyke, and Father Czmola was again hiding in our garden.

***

My débâcle in Paris sickened me but also I was very glad. I made sure that the check on the Westminster Bank was in its place.

But once more I had to meet the Ukrainian with his sarcastic face. I wouldn't tell him, of course, a word about my decision and about my defeat.

"Out of curiosity—" he said to me à propos of some recollection—"out of curiosity I crossed the Polish-Russian frontier, and I got caught by the Soviet frontier guards. They asked me who, what for, why, who sent me, they knocked my teeth,

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they interrogated me, and then they pushed me back across. On this side I got caught by the Polish frontier corps, they asked, they punched me, but they couldn't make anything out of me."

Say what you like, I thought, what's your name, my foster brother, but I couldn't get rid of a feeling of envy.

I thought, this is only a Ukrainian with his black palate.

He was wearing his overcoat even in the hot summer to hide the holes in his impossibly worn-out jacket. His hat, of an indescribable color, was pushed on the back of his head, and his trousers were baggy at the knees.

It was the same Ukrainian from the Slavonic Institute on the Rue Michelet. It annoyed me, all his "you, yours, of yours, you", and so on, and I tried to tell him something poisonous.

I said, "About your Ukraine can be said what Joyce said about Ireland, that Ireland is the sow who devours her own litter."

He grinned at this with his crooked grin, showing his beautiful teeth, white in his hollow face. A little boy who was playing by the bench where his mother sat, encouraged by this smile, rolled his colored ball in our direction. My companion became confused, he turned the ball around in his fingers, and afterwards awkwardly threw it back to the child.

It was very hot, and after looking into my pocket-book I proposed, "Shall we have a beer or something?"

"Your beer," he said contemptuously, "I have seen how they manufacture it when I worked in the brewery of Bière de l'Étoile de Fresnes, until they threw me out. It was hot there, you were stripped to your waist, working in the fermentation division, and with a dirty broom you swept everything from the floor—litter, spit, you were almost up to your ankles in it—into these vats. *Non, merci*... but would you lend me 70 centimes for the underground fare?"

He went along the path between the aviaries and the cages of the Jardin des Plantes. Under the wire domes and under the walls and arches of wire the birds of paradise, parrots,

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falcons, buzzards, toucans flapped, fluttered, and spread their tails, imprisoned...

The next day I cashed my check in the Westminster Bank in the Place Vendôme and I got my ticket at Thomas Cook. I put my things into my suitcase and went to the Gare du Nord. I travelled by night in the train, the window panes shook rhythmically, and we passed through the nocturnal landscape. In the daytime it was Charlerois, then Aachen, Essen, Hamm, Stendal, the foreign lands. On the chimney stacks and fences there were smeared swastikas.

In the same compartment, there was a Polish emigrant family going back to Poland, chomeurs, jobless, there were more of them in this same train. There was no longer place for them in France. He was a miner and she had worked in a textile factory. Their little daughter looked out of the window and called to her parents, "Vois-tu, la petite chèvre! Drôle, comme ça..."

I was wondering how it would be when I went back, if the big trees by the railway were cut down, the mill pond covered with reeds, if I should find it difficult to orientate myself in the throng of fences, if I should find the houses, the things, and the landscape diminished, as if I were looking over them through the reverse end of binoculars. The impression of quiet and sadness.

At the Polish frontier station there was some kind of assistance committee waiting for emigrants with hot food. In their midst, I also was greeted with a full plate of sausage and sour cabbage.

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IN MEMORY OF JANE FRAZER

When snow like sheep lay in the fold
And winds went begging at each door,
And the far hills were blue with cold,
And a cold shroud lay on the moor,

She kept the siege. And every day
We watched her brooding over death
Like a strong bird above its prey.
The room filled with the kettle's breath.

Damp curtains glued against the pane
Sealed time away. Her body froze
As if to freeze us all, and chain
Creation to a stunned repose.

She died before the world could stir.
In March the ice unloosed the brook
And water ruffled the sun's hair.
And a few sprinkled leaves unshook.

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GIDEON AT THE WELL

(for Janice)

Nudging and thrusting to the light
Crocuses snuff the air. The sun
Melts with his breath the frost of night
Scrawled like a snail-track on the stone.

Primroses thread the hills, the starved
Flanks of the soil; drenched valleys lie
Heavy as fleece—the sign I craved—
And still my tongued heart, rough and dry,

Can find no respite from its thirst.
The stones, the bruised lips of this well,
Yield me a honeycomb of dust.
No brimming of the springs can quell

My crackling wounds, no oil of love
Assuage them. Being sealed and chosen,
I raise my staff: the armies move,
As out of rock, as floods unfrozen.

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EUGENE WALTER

LOVE & COMEDY

MISS Thalia, the Queen of Comedy, came to earth one day, after a long absence, to check up on things in her theatre, the Lyric-Comedy. She found the theatre cold and dingy, and outside saw posters announcing a play in verse about cocktails, which had closed. Impatient, she shook her head spotted with wine and ornamented with grapes and grape leaves. She banged on the stage floor with her thyrsis, making the silver and gold bells upon it to tinkle and chatter.

"Let my servants appear!" she cried. "Let the comedians enter! Let them come in dress of scarlet and saffron, violet, tender blue, in their old costumes appropriate to their characters; and

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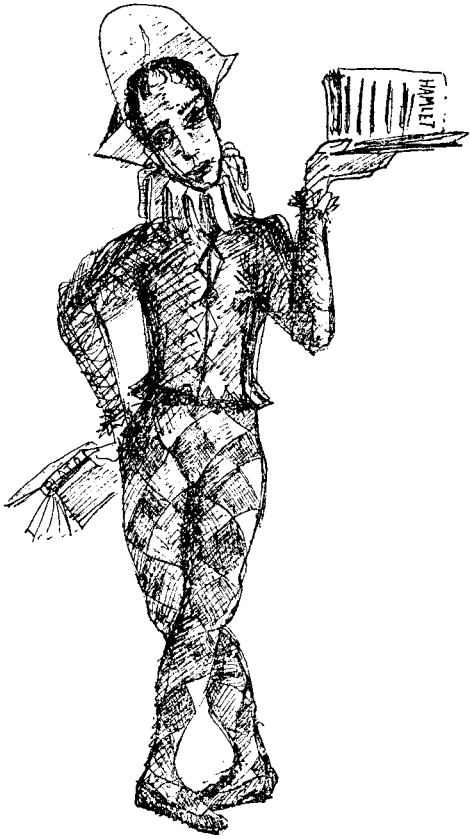
let my poet himself come in his evening clothes, with his masterpiece. Oh, stage carpenters, destitute of sacred fire! Oh, union officials, with cabbages for heads! Oh, managers slower than turtles! Where are my zanies and my sweet fools?"

As she cried out, they began to appear, dragging themselves from the wings gloomily: there was Pierrot, grown fat; Harlequin reading a tome; Columbine (sniffling) in bouffante attire; the Fairy with her tinsel star; the Market Women carrying fish made of painted canvas; Blondina and the Talking Lion, silent; and lastly a rather disconsolate Dancing Dog.

"In the names of all the gods at once, what has happened to you?" cried Miss Thalia, when she recovered from her surprise. "You, Pierrot, what has changed you to this obscene Humpty-Dumpty? You who were white as snow, thin, and sad over your red rose: what means this girth, this ruddy face, this sprig of nightshade?"

But then she spied the studious Harlequin.



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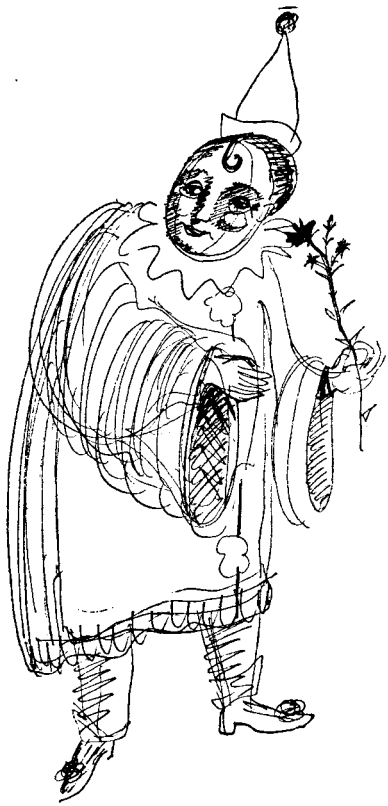
"And Harlequin—" she gasped, "you who once were subtle as a snake of Asia, you who pranked and glittered—where, sir, have you caught this sad air, and why do you walk with head bent, as if you were a Harlequin Prince of Denmark? Oh, and you, Miss Columbine, pray why do you cough and look like a prude?"

So scolded the mistress of Aristophanes, not at all pleased with her actors who were so transformed. Pierrot, all pink and warm, defended them with the eloquence of his heart.

"Alas, madam," said Pierrot, "the Devil knows my passions were innocent. To steal the wine that the Fairy changed for my punishment into a sky-rocket, to cook chickens made of cardboard, to serenade the moon—these were my austere pleasures! Then nothing troubled the serene candor of my face, white as the gown of a bride. But none may escape his fate: I have been psychoanalyzed, madam, and I have blushed. I have tried to wash my face to its old white, but pshaw! nor potash nor pumice-stone has been of avail.



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"Harlequin, well, he's never been the same since he got his library card. He is always deep in his books, philosophies I think, and is not near so lovable. He has scarce turned a somersault for twenty-five years, and nowadays never catches flies and eats them. As for Columbine—"

"That *Columbine*!" interrupted Thalia impatiently. "Will you please leave your mirror, missy, and tell me how it is you've caught a cold?"

Columbine came forward, lowering her large assassinating eyes fringed with black lashes. She murmured, "Dear madam, once (sniff) I was all giggles, but pity me! They have covered me with camellias and I have become like camellias. They have sculpted me in marble, and I have become as cold as marble. I was told to cough in fun and now I cough in earnest. They taught me to recite noble pentameters, and now I have religious ideas, and on Thursday afternoons speak to the ladies' garden clubs."

"But this is unbearable," exclaimed Miss Thalia, indig-

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nantly. "A consumptive Columbine, an apoplectic Pierrot, a melancholy Harlequin! I hope at least that my poet has written a fine satire in couplets. Then, I'm sure that old Pantaloon and his asthma remain unchanged. Pantaloon!"

"Great goddess," he replied, "I am changed, but I should care: I have my social security. I shall always be as witty as an uncashed check, and never again the dupe of Harlequin."

"And the fairy with the tinsel wand?" asked Miss Thalia, beginning to wonder.

"Oh, she's learning to be a Swan Queen," they replied.

"Toby, the dancing dog, who steals the sausages?"

"Worms," said his master, Harlequin.

"Certainly Blondina and the Talking Lion, who sing a line or two and shake a leg, are still in good form?"

"Television, in a word," sniffed Columbine, and they all bowed their heads.

Thalia bit her lip and frowned. "The Market Women do they still whack each other on the head with their painted fish?"

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"Still more sadness," replied Ermintruda, the elder of the two old wives. "There is dispute these many years as to whether our fish are part of the scenery or part of our costumes—until the Supreme Court, year after next, gives down its decision, there are Scene-Shifters and Wardrobe Mistresses to keep us off the stage."

"*Ohimé*!" raved Miss Thalia, tearing off her garlands, and striking the ground with her wand. "I guess I dare not ask the health of the Child Love?"

"Ho-ho, ask away, dear Thalia!" cried that impudent Child, as he arrived in a chariot pulled by wooden doves. "For you see that I alone remain unchanged. The League of Decency, the Anti-Nudity League, the Anti-Human League, the Anti-Sequin League, the Anti-Animal League—indeed, even the Anti-League League— have all tried to clothe me and send me away to Trade School, but you see me, still naked, still adamant. Fortunately for me, the poets and the pastrycooks are all on my side."

"My chariot," he added

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smiling, "has just been regilded."

"Come away, Love!" cried Thalia, taking heart, in a fury of tears and laughter all commingled. "We must have a long talk together. Things are in one hell of a mess, and if Love and Comedy cannot righten them, then the sun may as well forget to rise."

She turned to the actors. "Ridiculous masks, fall! Pierrot, take back the rose! Harlequin, throw away your books! *You*, Columbine—! I must have life, incisive words, steel-edged epigrams, stinging quips, healthy joy and saintly irony. Remember, little Fools, I was born in Athens, in the warmest time of the year!"

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AFTER THE WAR

John was the writer tell me
who was John
Brother
John was the writer (Calling
Hey John!
Ho John!)
in words of fire (Well,
John don't you write no more;
don't you write no more).

Eternal City, Rome is
fallen stone
standing
Eternal City, struck to
white flame,
bold flame;
the blazing houses all
Glory Hallelujah cry,
Hallelujah cry.

All those angels
Stoned in thunder,
Snow white angels
Brought to ruin,
Son of David
Done gone under.
Son of man:

That pen of fire moving
on to Köln
rocking
church and the city (Shouting
Ho John,
Rome town):

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a shell-fire image, those
brought to ruin houses (no more,
don't you write no more!)
Well now, they tell me Kölner
rock ran cold
Jesus
down by the river; digging
ground down
deep found
another city; done
gone under Köln to Rome
under Köln to Rome:

Mary's baby
Done gone under,
Son of David
Brought to ruin,
Bleeding lamb
Stoned in thunder.
Son of man.

I been a witness (tell it)
who was John
Brother
John was the writer (shout it)
Rome town,
Köln town,
that pen of fire (Ho!
John, don't you write no more;
don't you write no more!)

—Vilma Howard

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HERE BE DRAGONS

"FOR eighteen years, Jack Wilson," she was saying for the third time, "your father took pictures for my family, and we were never dissatisfied. I'm *sure* if he were back here now—if he weren't in the hospital—"

"No, Mrs. Porter," said Jack inappropriately. Oh my god, no, Mrs. Porter. My father will never be back: haven't you heard about death, about winding sheets and embalming? Haven't you heard the grey legend that when one is sick one either gets better or worse? One cannot remain diseased to the same extent for seven months.

"I mean, just look at these," she complained, shuffling the photographs before his face. "Do I look anything like them?"

Nodding, he stared past Mrs. Porter, past the pictures shaking in her hand, past the smoky-grey waiting room with worn modern furniture and potted floor plants, through the single soot-measled window, through the rain. It was a straight stiff meaningless autumn rain: rain that brings depression without reason, nostalgia without memory, as though appealing to a long forgotten hatred of dismal weather. When all the lights have been switched off in the studio, Jack recalled and the door to the waiting room has been closed, a silver strangeness glows from the red velvet posing benches lined

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against the walls. Often, when he was much younger and had some problem to think out by himself, he would steal the key to the shop from his father's overcoat while the family sat at dinner, and later, when they had gone to bed, he would leave the house (ignoring his mother's calls from behind her bedroom door) and hurry down the nightdim streets to the studio where he would lock himself in to stare peacefully at the silver glow along the walls. He thought of doing this now as he watched Mrs. Porter's hands jerking before the dead face of her fox collar.

"You can't *really* expect me to take these, Jack, can you? I mean, you know, your father would—"

"No," he said thinly. "I guess not. We'll try taking them again." Walking to the back wall, Jack slid the pictures through the darkroom slot, pausing a moment to stare into the mirror above the slot. He avoided the reflection of his eyes for fear he might not find them open, and instead gazed at the curve of his jaw and then at his straight thin hair, now a deep brown because of the damp weather. Behind him he could see Mrs. Porter adjusting her hat.

"I've got some marvelous ideas," she said, the hatpin stabbed between her teeth. "And I've absolutely got to send some to Bobby. He's in California now and he doesn't have a single—"

"But I'm afraid we won't be able to take them today, Mrs. Porter. I'll have to be leaving soon. Will Saturday be all right for you? At eleven?"

"Oh, sure, that's fine, Jack. I suppose you're seeing your dad this afternoon? Don't forget to tell him we hope he'll be back soon. I've been meaning to send him something, but you know how those things are. You keep putting them off..."

"Yes, I know," said Jack, although in fact he did not know, for in spite of his distasteful avoidance of major issues, he was always aware of superficial obligations: small boxes of expensive sweets for house visits to friends; quilted, perfumed, maudlin greeting cards for every occasion; and even, although they had been married ten years, ridiculous little trinkets for

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Janice on half-, and sometimes quarter-year anniversaries. Superstitiously he felt that rigid observance of small duties destroyed, or at least postponed, the coming of great occasions when he might be forced into an experience larger than chocolates or bric-a-brac and never described in the four rhyming lines of a greeting card.

Swinging her black coat together Mrs. Porter hooked the fox's tail into its lip, then lit a cigarette and dropped the match upon the pot of one of the floor plants as she walked through the waiting room. When she was gone, Jack sank to a posing bench, closed his eyes and listened—his ear against the wall—to the faint, distant splash of rain upon the building. *Tell him*, she had said, *we hope he'll be back soon*. Tell him we hope he will unsay a word, uneat a meal, undo what's done and irrevocable; tell him to undie his death and come back to live under the lightproof curtain behind the camera. *When will he die? Why doesn't he die?* How many more months would his face continue to shrink like a rusted reluctant carnation, yielding gradually, clinging to its original form to the limits of possibility? How many more months would his body continue to vanish in that huge chartreuse room with private toilet and private nurses where he waited impatiently not to die. Everyone else in the family—Martha, Conrad, Paul, the uncles and aunts —all of them wanted him to die. Death would be merciful, they said, and recommended it like cough syrup.

His father's illness had meant little to Jack until the old man was forced to leave the store permanently and the entire business fell to him. He knew the routine, of course: the conventional poses, the put-your-head-this-way-not-that-way, the prices to ask, and the words to say. But before this his father had been in complete charge, and his departure seemed to seal Jack's final exit, an exit he knew he would never have used but whose existence was his single impossible hope, at once thrilling and frightening. For Jack had never intended to be a photographer; it had all happened so gradually like birth or war or puberty that he felt he had been steadily and powerlessly pushed into it. At sixteen he had gone to the

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store on Saturdays; at seventeen he worked Tuesday and Thursday afternoons; and when he had graduated from high school he had begun to work full time. There was no process of consideration behind it; it was merely the most natural, the most obvious, step to take: the step that most resembled the step before. Changes must be made gradually, he knew, in order to gather the courage to accept them: a woman's belly swells for half-a-year before a child is born; the breath of war warms us long before the tongues of flame lash out; and there are the imperceptible hairs, the phlegmatic juices, that arrive before maturity. Actually Jack had meant to go on to college but there had been so many things: his mother's death, marriages in the family, and then, just before the war, Janice had come along, and then, well then... He had become so imbedded in the business that it was impossible to withdraw, like a fish-hook speared deeply into the flesh so that there is less discomfort in leaving it in than in trying to remove it.

Once, however, he had attempted to tear the fishhook out. He had tried to take a step which was neither the most natural nor the most obvious. It happened when he had begun working with his father and had become bored with days so similar that one was any other and all of them the same one. Although he did not talk about his boredom, it was obvious, having settled into the structure of his face. His sister Martha, a plain fat girl who was much older than Jack, had suggested painting as a hobby; she mentioned it at dinner every evening for two weeks, sometimes assisted by other members of the family, so that at last their father went to a department store and bought the large size Artist's Kit plus two books on landscape painting. Surrounded by equipment, Jack began to paint—indifferently at first, but after a while with strange enthusiasm. It was as though a magic lens had been placed over his eyes: everything took on new forms, new dimensions, new colors faraway from the flat grey-white-black of the camera. If a model moved, if a tree shook suddenly in the wind, if a head trembled with unseen emotion, it did not mean a ruined plate or a blurred image: it meant something deep and inward. He attended art courses regu-

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larly and, after a year, he realized how seriously he was taking his hobby, and he knew that he wanted to hurry away from his father's photography shop to paint. He had saved a thousand dollars which, in 1938, seemed endless, and so he planned to take a room somewhere in the city where he could spend each day painting and build a life round this work. It was now several months since his family had come to take pleasure in Jack's pictures only when company came; the rest of the time their interest was limited to wondering if the paints were not making the boy a little nervous.

When Jack told them of his plans to leave, they rumbled with surprise, then subsided into two-days' silence. It was Martha who began to talk. "Bohemianism," she said irrelevantly, "ended in the twenties, Jack. You can't walk out on a responsible life today. You just can't." The rest agreed, presenting sound and rational arguments—and looking to their father whose worried muteness was obviously a sign of his displeasure with Jack. Nevertheless the boy found a room in the East Seventies and gave the landlord a deposit. On the night before he was to have left, the sedentary fear of sudden change turned to panic and he ran to the telephone in the empty living room, closing the door securely behind him, to call his friend Harvey.

"Harvey," he had said. "Tell me I'm doing the right thing. Tell me I'm right."

Now Harvey was a solemn boy who had admired Jack's paintings and had always encouraged him, but that evening he said: "I don't know. These kind of things are always up to the person who does them. No one can tell you if you're right."

"I'm scared, Harvey. I don't know."

And then Harvey said the most terrible thing of all: "I guess it's because it's changing things. Everything will be different."

"For Christ's sake, nothing will be different," Jack shouted defensively. "I'm not moving that far. It's only twenty minutes from home. Everything will be *just* the same."

"All right, boy. Maybe you're right, but it just seems to me like everything will be changed."

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And in the end Jack did not leave: he lost his deposit, he lost his desire to move, and, aided by Martha, he eventually even lost his interest in painting. To placate his feelings he did two things: he anonymously sent the disappointed landord a box of cheap cigars, and he never spoke to his friend Harvey again. Now and then Jack would drive by the old Victorian brownstone with fenced windows and ornate ledges, and sometimes he would see a young man with a bag of laundry slung over his shoulder or a portfolio under his arm and he would wonder. But now it was too late for anything but kissing Janice when he got home from work and raising Freddie and growing slowly, gradually, into middle age. *Too late.* Realizing the time he slipped into his coat, dumped a brown fedora at the back of his head, and ran through the street, wrinkling his collar together against the rain, until he reached the blue Ford.

Inside the cold airless car he lit a cigarette and the windows fogged slowly as if coated thinly with wax. The street was deserted and, except for the traffic light which blinked with half-minute precision, one would have thought it was never used. Down the wet shining walk a black and white tomcat, fat and circular as an image of Buddha, sat in a doorway plumply preening himself. When Jack started the motor, the tom looked up, his eyes yellow-green and transparent like tinted cellophane as though you could see through them into his head. He rose and humped himself, then rubbed his back against the wall and padded to another doorway where he sat down again.

Driving up the street, Jack turned left on Fifth Avenue. The rain was beginning to ease and all along the street women stretched thin veiny hands from store-fronts to test the rain; two old women, cheeks cracked and plaster-white as if from years of face powder, linked arms and walked a stringy poodle in front of Jack's car, ignoring the traffic light. At the corner of Fifty-sixth Street behind a mass of skittering, round-shouldered pedestrians Jack saw the antique shop where he had bought the map, a print of a fourteenth century English map of the world done on rough cream-colored paper, cracked

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and singed round the edges to create the illusion of authenticity. He had bought it two years before when Freddie was only five because he thought the boy might enjoy the brightly colored figures scattered here and there along the sides. The map was a detailed drawing of the known world, but to the west in the unchartered Atlantic where America was yet to be discovered were clusters of steel-tongued serpents leaning over the legend *Here Be Dragons*, and in the north lay a nest of brooding chimeras under which was printed *Here Be Several Kindes of Serpents*.

Jack suddenly pictured a black-robed cartographer standing over his medieval drawing-board and labeling the unknown as fearful, as the most fearful, as probable death at the hands of the indescribably grotesque. And what could be more terrifying than death in the fourteenth century, or death today, or even next year? And the black-robed cartographer knew this; he knew that death, the most violent of all changes, was the final prohibitor. He understood that death —as old as life, peopled with the living, the once living, and the not yet living—was new for each man: a sea voyage into the land of dragons which each man fears and yet, at last, each man embarks upon. "Where will grandpa go when he dies?" Freddie had asked one hot September night as they lingered late in the garden behind the house, for already he knew one simply did not vanish. And Jack had answered, enraged by heat and mosquitoes and the calm with which Janice slept in the beach chair, "He will go to the place of serpents and dragons." And the boy had begun to cry until Jack, vaguely aware of an error, whispered formulas of comfort to make Freddie disbelieve what he himself felt was the truth.

The hospital stood opposite the mud-soft hills of the park and the warped trees from which still hung a few soggy autumn leaves. The rain had been suspended into a thick cotton-like fog that folded round him miserably, gluing his clothes to his flesh. In the building he showed his pass and hurried to the elevator, riding to the seventh floor where he was immediately aware of the smell—the dull powdery odor, ubiquitous as fog: on the white steel chairs, on the silly chartreuse

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walls, tacked up on the doors beside the room numbers, and even, Jack realized pressing his lips tightly together, on his tongue. There was no way for him to describe it nor even to recall it once he had left the hospital, but he had come to think of it poetically as the chartreuse smell of death.

The door to his father's room was open but the old man did not see him for he was turned, one hand clutching the sheet, the other the bed post, to the window.

"Hello," said Jack, sinking to a wicker chair beside the bed.

"Oh," the old man sighed. "It's you." Slowly and with great effort he turned to face his son. In the four days Jack had not seen him his jaundice had deepened, rusted, as though someone had come regularly to beat him.

"Did Janice call?" Jack asked. "She said she was going to."

"I don't know. I don't know. They took the phone away because I couldn't stand the noise."

"That's too bad," said Jack and blushed.

"Yes, it's too bad," the old man smiled. "How's Freddie?"

"Oh, he's fine. God, you'd never recognize him. He must have grown almost a foot since—"

"I'd like to see him."

"Maybe I can bring him over on Saturday and you can look at him through the window."

Putting his hand to his face the old man said quickly, "No! He wouldn't like to see me like this. Better let him stay home and play."

They were quiet as he turned back to the window; Jack's eyes followed him, then stopped, unblinking, to stare at the back of his father's head: the hair was thin and shockingly stiff with a greenish cast like the dead and brittle weeds of a winter garden.

"Are things all right at the store?" his father asked without looking at him.

"Don't worry: everything's fine. I had a little trouble

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today with that old bag Mrs. Porter. She didn't like the shots I took of her."

"I know how she is. You've always got to fix them up first so they don't look like her. Then she's happy." He turned suddenly, his eyes sharp on Jack. "What happened to those pictures you sent to *Life*?"

Life. The word was strange, anomalous, a fairy tale word that did not belong in a dead man's vocabulary.

"I told you they sent them back days ago," said Jack quietly.

"I knew they would," the old man whispered with disgust. "You should have tried to do something with them. They could have been wonderful pictures if you sharpened the foreground a little."

"Look, Dad, it was your idea to send them out, not mine. They were just pictures to amuse Freddie. I'm no good with fancy shots—just family stuff and babies, ordinary things."

"You wanted to be an artist once," he said, closing his eyes to indicate he was in pain. The noise gave him pains; light gave him pains; silence and darkness gave him pains; everything churned and picked the intestinal filth of his disease. *My old man is a dirty old man*, the childhood rhyme sang uncontrollably through Jack's head. *My old man is a dirty old man.*

Stretching a yellow arm his father caught the corner of the sheet and wrinkled it into his palm. He holds the sheet, Jack thought, because it is *here* and *now* and *familiar* and he is afraid of being transported to death, of slipping onto a ship into the water and sailing away to the unknown, the unheard from: and if he cannot take life along with him to death, he would take some emblem of it—a bed post or the sheet.

"I feel chilly," the old man complained, pulling the sheet above his shoulders.

Jack sat quietly, without moving, without talking, hardly blinking his eyelids until four o'clock.

After Freddie had been put to bed and Janice had gone

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into the kitchen to finish the supper dishes, Jack lay down on the long angle-armed sofa. The blinds were still up and the puffy blue fog, luminous from the floor-lamp beside the window, sailed tenderly against the pane.

"I called the doctor today, Jack," shouted Janice from the kitchen.

Her cry surprised him and he turned slowly on his side, closed his eyes, and felt a shock shiver through his belly as if suddenly, while lying on the sofa, he had become his father. A grim picture of the old man, withered and alone in the chartreuse darkness of the hospital room, moved drearily through his mind.

"I said, I called the doctor today, Jack," she repeated, untying her florid plastic apron as she came into the living room.

"Oh? What was wrong?"

"I called about your father."

"What did he say?"

"Four or five weeks—maybe less. They can never be sure. I wish they could do something for him."

Walking to the mirror above the fireplace she laced her fingers rapidly through the ends of her hair and then smoothed it back at her temples. She found Jack's eyes in the mirror and smiled, rounding her lips, until finally he chuckled; then she flopped comically to the hassock beside the sofa.

"Hello, sweet," she said and touched his forehead. Reaching into his pocket she slid out the package of cigarettes and lit one. Jack became aware of waiting for her to offer it to him: she did, but he shook his head. It was a ritual—a familiar, endless, comfortable ritual that made everything all right.

"And we can go away somewhere," she was saying.

"When?"

"Afterwards: when it's over. We can take Freddie out of school for a couple of weeks and just fly away somewhere."

"Yes," he said. "That would be nice."

Janice stood up.

"For Christ's sake," he snapped. "Where you going now?"

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"Up to Freddie's room. I want to see if he's all right."

"Of course he's all right. He's probably asleep. Sit down!" he said, lifting himself from the sofa. "I'll go."

Starting up the stairs, he heard Janice switch the radio on, and he hurried to the room, turning the doorknob quietly. The room was completely dark except for the red darkroom bulb socketed in the wall, a small bulb whose dull magenta glow illuminated itself and part of the wall immediately round it, but nothing else. It was kept there only because Freddie had got used to it and would not let them remove it. Jack closed the door and listened to his son's steady breathing, then walked to the light. The map was tacked up beside it and Jack placed his hand along the singed edge. And the world, with the shadow of his fingers trembling across it, was red and impossible, more weird, more frightening, than it had ever been, as if textured of fire and hell. He placed his thumb upon England, the center of this medieval world, and traced a path, an imaginary voyage, through the molten Atlantic, over the nest of chimeras, among the clusters of serpents: and finally he anchored his finger beside the bulb. Quickly he switched the light off and turned to face the bed. The bed clothes rustled and the mattress puffed and, although he could see nothing in the darkness, he knew the boy was awake, frightened from sleep by the absence of light.

"Wh-who's there?" Freddie mumbled. "Is that you, Mommy?... Daddy?"

Leaning quietly against the wall, Jack listened to his son's whimpering.

"Who is it?" the boy cried.

Look said Jack, the word hanging soundlessly from his lips. Look and see who it is, Freddie. There is nothing to be afraid of for there is only darkness, and darkness is thin and comprehensible: you have only to look and you will see through it. And it is harmless, after all, in spite of everything I've said, for there are no dragons here—and strangely it is only your father.

"Please, who is it?" The boy wept quietly, choked with

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fear, and made an oddly mature sound of distress exactly like a mourner.

Suddenly he screamed, "Mommy! Daddy! Come up!"

Jack leaned forward and again there was the scream: "Mommy!"

"All right, Freddie, all right," said Jack sitting down close beside him on the bed.

"Oh, Daddy. It was you." He began to cry easily with obvious relief. Jack stroked his hair back softly.

"Why didn't you answer me, Daddy?"

"I didn't hear you."

"I was scared. I felt so scared."

"There was nothing to be afraid of." Reaching into his pocket he drew out a coin and pressed it into the child's hand. "Are you better now, Freddie? Do you think you'll be able to go back to sleep?"

"Yes—only why is the light off?"

"I don't know."

"Please put it on, Daddy."

Walking again to the wall, Jack switched the bulb on: the map bloomed red and grotesque like a nightmare-flower.

"There," said Jack as he opened the door. "The light's on and there's nothing to be afraid of."

Downstairs the radio sang a quiet ballad, and Jack walked to the window and stared out at the blue fog.

"Everything all right, dear?" asked Janice.

"Yes," he said without looking at her. "He was asleep. I told you he would be asleep."

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RELATIVITY

As you look up at me and think you know
That in the light of now I'm such and such—
This light has been relinquished long ago.

Logic, in fact, can prove me so and so,
For sight may be a shade less dark than touch.
As you look up at me and think you know,

The arabesque of logic twirls its toe;
Its foothold on a pinhead feigns a clutch—
This sleight has been relinquished long ago.

Feeling itself falls back, tripped up as though
The heart it leant on were too short a crutch,
As you look up at me and think you know.

But let a flash of insight be less slow,
It may retrieve to intuition's hutch
This light has-been, relinquished long ago:

Mere starlight, obsolete; can only show
A burst that was, and not the coming. Much
As you look up at me and think, you know:
This light has been relinquished long ago.

—JOHN SIMON

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MICHEL BÉRET

Just off the Rue de Babylone, in a quiet room overlooking an enclosed garden, Michel Laurent Simon Béret carefully prepares preliminary sketches and then draws on the lithographic stone his opulent but fastidious flower fantasies to complete a series called *Les bizarreries de la nature.* Béret, Paris-born, studied a bit at the Beaux Arts, then went on to study and sketch on his own, turned to copper engraving and produced a succession of *éditions de luxe*: *La grâce* by Francis Jammes (1946), *Images de Paris* by Alexander Arnoux (1948), and a beautiful *Sonnets* of Ronsard (1950) among others. He has shown three exhibitions in Paris since 1945, is represented in collections of the Library of Congress and New York Public Library. The French Culture Centre in New York showed his engravings when Béret travelled in the United States.

In turning to lithography to illustrate *Venise, Masques et Façades*—an elegant oblong album with a text of André Fraigneau—Béret seemed to find his true vein, began to design these floral personages where the careful draughtsmanship and a sense of fantasy bright, *sec*, controlled, mark his descent from such individual French graphic masters as Callot and Grandville. Béret momentarily prepares a new showing for the Galerie Palmes in December and foresees a new project of an especially Gallic invention: the Seven Capital Sins seen as flowers.

Here, from *Les bizarreries*: (*Opposite*) *Clorinde,* the Courtisane of Italian Comedy, as a Dahlia. (*Following pages*) *L'Homme de Cour* in form of a Carnation, and *L'Homme de Guerre* shown as a Zinnia with bristling cape of Cardon leaves.

E. W.

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MARCEL MOUSSY

Translated by J. P. C. Train

THE MUSHROOM HUNT

THE mist was like cotton. Wrapped in it they gathered up the mushrooms: delicate, plump, velvet, born of a shower perhaps, or a miracle that drew from the earth these cowls, these shapes of mysterious life compounded of tiny whitened folds. Above, the lofty trunks and the smell of dead leaves awoke memories of peasant forefathers. Through the mist lost and nostalgic cows bellowed in concert with tugboats on the river.

In a patch free of fog, scarcely the size of the attic of a house, Frederic, with a mushroom in his hand, reflected on his situation. A long and fruitless quest had led him to the rare specimen that he now held between thumb and forefinger, not knowing where to put it, brooding over its brown hemisphere like Hamlet over a skull. In this indecisive state he was surprised by Rosine. "Not a very good spot," he said to her, to be polite. She pushed a few blond strands back beneath her silk scarf.

"I'll find some," she said, holding the corners of her apron together with one hand. It's swollen shape indicated a full harvest. This little woman is so much more practical than I am, he thought. They all are; I'd die of hunger wandering around in this wood. Not her.

"You can throw yours away," she said, "it's poisonous." He obeyed: at the foot of a tree, the black-topped toadstool would rot, the filaments of its life severed.

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"Where have you put the rest?" she asked.

"That was my first." Frederic straightened up suddenly, flung a mushroom into the bowl formed by her apron, and said, "Let's go back!" He took her arm to lead her off.

She did not say anything, so he resigned himself to knowing nothing of her thoughts for fear of finding how little he himself was mingled in them. She had assumed the virtuous look of a well-brought-up young lady who, while returning from the ball, hides her vexation from her escort only perhaps to sob once the bolt is closed. She would know perfectly well how to defend herself in a life already broken up, almost ruined, where romance and chivalry had no further meaning.

"Fifty-six."

So much for romanticism! She had been counting her pickings.

Her small feet sank at almost every step into the beds of dead leaves piled up by innumerable autumns in layers of decay reaching to the roots where all would begin again. Instead of a squirrel they saw a gray ball projected from the cottony ceiling, instead of magpies, flying shuttle-cocks laced with gold and silver and returned by some racquet of branches. Overcome by the power of this silent world, with the same thought they both called out: the shout was muffled as though in a padded room. Listening more clearly to the silence they noticed the continuous hissing, the filtering of millions of droplets into the crevices of bark and into the earth.

She had only a light shawl over her shoulders: he put his cloak over her. He followed her at arm's length in order not to get lost completely himself; when she heard him shivering, she could not help offering him half of his cloak.

From that moment on he gave up deliberately opposing a conspiracy of circumstance directed by a hand at the same time too firm and too easy. He abandoned himself to a communion that exceeded both of them, which joined two indifferent presences united against the coldness of the world,

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the hostility of the forest night, and the beating of unknown wings.

They stumbled and helped each other rise looking for a way out of the wood or a place to stop.

Finally, Rosine's patience in gathering twigs enabled them to make a fire. In the beginning there was fear in the forests of ancient Europe, but also the joy of fear dispelled in the glare of great resinous flames. Frederic provided matches and huge useless branches which he tore down with tremendous crashes. Bent over that glowing mirror that in turn reflected her face framed in the oval of the silk kerchief, she looked like a peasant virgin who instills faith in the happiness of the moment. When they were warm again they extinguished the last embers and set off once more into the night, automatically resuming their common position beneath the cloak. In spite of himself he squeezed her hand to support her when she stumbled.

A succession of dead leaves, ferns, wrinkled tree-trunks which, once recognized, they leaned on in passing—deceptive stumps: she came close to twisting her ankle and had to sit down and rub it—brought them at last across some fields and then into a darkened village which was not the one they had left earlier.

The only light they could see drew them to it. In the main room of the inn hunters were sitting at their dinner while peasants exchanged grumbles at the bar. After his initial surprise the innkeeper led them into the kitchen to choose from an array of game laid out on a white wooden table.

Rosine momentarily recoiled: surrounded by great hares with smashed jawbones was a squirrel no bigger than a fist with his teeth sunk into his lip. Frederic asked the name of a long-billed bird with beige wings spread out on a pile of bloody hair. It was a bittern, said the innkeeper apologetically, killed solely to be displayed—no more racketing in the water for him! Frederic remembered that sinister clacking of a beak that in his childhood had gripped him with fright

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at a bend in the path. He ordered two grey doves, whose crops when emptied revealed some whole acorns.

"Prretty poorr pickin's forr them, this time of the yearr," said the cook rolling the r's, and he agreed to prepare some mushrooms as well.

Thus the autumn ends in kitchens, and the ovens bring forth the very essence of whatever grows or flies. Frederic told Rosine how the hunters loved the game, that they killed it to see it closer, to have it in hand and touch it, just as artists replace the world's vague and distant shapes with works more tangible and more appropriate. But the noisy harsh-spoken rustics gorging at the next table did not have the air of artists. She persisted right through dessert in regarding them as the murderers of the tiny squirrel.

There only remained one room with two beds. Rosine said nothing before the innkeeper and only explained on the landing when they had been left alone with a fat smoking lamp.

"I've been almost engaged," she said, very sedately, "but I've never been in a room with a boy... do you understand?"

He proposed that he go and sleep below, on a bench.

"You're as tired as I am," she said, "and we've got to get up early tomorrow to get that coach. All this is no fault of yours. We can quite well sleep in the same room. I would just like you to promise me to... to be good."

He promised gladly. The idea of waiting for the last drinker to leave, then sleeping in the cold smoke on the bare boards aroused very little enthusiasm in him. When they opened the door a blazing fire greeted them. It was better than in the forest. If marriage had this savor, thought Frederic, I would make a good husband. But isn't it just the opposite that is charming, the unforseeable conjunction, without a return, without thought, without coquetry, of two young beings still escaping from the ills of gravity?

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I think that we are well off, and that it is not going to last."

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"Well, I have faith in what the good Lord has in store for me."

"He's not treated you too badly up to now," he said.

"I suppose not. But one's so lonely all the same."

"And in society one's irritated. That's the trouble. Whatever we do tonight, tomorrow it's us they'll be talking about."

"Tomorrow's so far away, for me! When I was very small I could never believe when I went to bed that the night would end, that I'd have to get up early the next day."

"Do you get up early?" he asked.

"At five."

"That must be awful. What do you do to keep that pretty coloring?"

Autumn ends next to the fire as well, on a ruddy-cheeked face with hazel eyes and reddish-brown hair like late Moissac, whose reflections prolong a memory of the sun and which one keeps for the final sip of the repast. Her hair kept a scent of bark and dead leaves.

"You promised to be good!"

"Good, yes, but not silly. Aren't you more comfortable like this?"

Always this mad desire to think oneself unique, at the very moment that her head lay in the hollow of his shoulder, a shoulder that for her with her back turned was in no way different from any other—a traditional prop of most ancient design—as though the anonymity of their joined presences was not in itself the greatest miracle of the night of time.

"The fire is dying."

And the fire, the exception to the night, and the warmth of their breath, of their blood, an ephemeral defiance to all the deserts of stars...

"It's time to sleep!"

She escaped, ordering him to turn around. He stood up and gazed at the morbid interlacing and bloodless fruits of the tapestry, whose agony was prolonged by several

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dancing glimmers. The bed smelt of musty lavender. When he turned again, only her head emerged from the counterpane. As irresistably he drew near, she buried herself down to her grape-colored locks, protesting in a muffled voice, "You promised me..."

"Now I wonder what it is that is good... Anyway, here we are, caught. Who will believe in our innocence?"

"My father always believes me. I'll tell him the truth." The rigid shadow of the father, with seamless mustaches and standing as straight as timber, stopped him. "Anyway, you don't love me," she said. "The first time I want someone who loves me."

It was her right, this girl. Venal or sentimental, when would women be interested in the simple harmony of bodies, of the spheres? He kissed her forehead before putting out the lamp.

She said into the darkness, softly, "If some day you love me, I won't say no."

He undressed quickly and raised the covers. Perhaps it was all for the best, but *vindieu*, how cold the sheets were!

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THE CRUCIFIXION

After Thomas Eakins

The sun hangs on the blistered rock,
The Jew hangs in the sun;
The clamorers are done
Or almost done for strain of shock
And effort to relieve the strain
Have bent the knees and cracked the pain:
The end is coming soon.

On the head is bruised the shroud,
The landscape crushing dull;
The callous Red Sea gull
That saw is wandering in a cloud
While stretching out beyond the scarp
The wind and heat begin to scant
Against the hanging wall.

The hands that bruised against the space
Are weak as when the sword
Was still and the eager Seth
Stood dumb at the radiant face
Of the infant in the garden
And made the journey to Hebron
With the three seeds of birth.

As the shadows cross the breast
And spread quietly where
The hole from the bent spear
Darkens in the delicate mist,
A last sigh forces down the Gulf
Along the continental shelf
And through the upper air.

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All we can ask is remembrance
Have sung the angels on the shore
The thing you see is what is real
And is the simple past
From now until the last
For what is lost is lost for all
As when the snow fed lakes

And sweet water of mountain creeks
Once flowed across the earth
After its distant birth
And cut away the hardest rocks
To feed the hot holes of the sea;
A thin suspension settled free
And fell into the depth

As water washed the drifting chain
And rose around the coast.
This is the simple past
Here underneath the rain
For what you see is what is real
And what is lost is lost for all
From now until the last.

—Will Morgan

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Short Stories

ALFRED CHESTER was born and schooled in Brooklyn, New York. Two years ago he came to live in a tiny village near Paris, where he has completed a novel, *Jamie Is My Heart's Desire*, and short stories published in *Botteghe Oscure* and other reviews.

JAMES LEO HERLIHY was born in 1927 in Detroit. He attended Black Mountain College and resides presently in New York City. He has written two plays, one recently produced at the Pasadena Playhouse. His first published story appears in the current issue of *Discovery*.

MARCEL MOUSSY was born in Algiers in 1924. He has written a number of plays, one of which, *Le Dernier Métro pour Cythère*, won first prize in the National Competition of Young Theatrical Companies. His first novel, *Le Sang Chaud*, was published by Gallimard in 1952. *The Mushroom Hunt* is an extract from his second novel, *Arcole ou La Terre Promise*, published in October by Éditions de la Table Ronde.

TERRY SOUTHERN'S *The Accident* appeared in the first issue of THE PARIS REVIEW. His short stories have also appeared in *Janus* and *New-Story*. A native of Texas, he has spent considerable time writing in Paris.

Chronicle

ZYGMUNT HAUPT was born in Eastern Poland in 1907. As an artillery officer he served in the Polish army from 1939 through 1946. He is now a resident of the United States. His stories have appeared in *Accent*, *Furioso*, *Perspectives*, and *The Chicago Review*.

Fable

EUGENE WALTER'S first novel, *The Untidy Pilgrim*, is to be published by Lippincott this winter. He has designed for the theater and the Mardi Gras, and has shown two exhibitions of drawings and paintings, although writing is his chief occupation.

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Interview

JOHN PHILLIPS is the author of *The Second Happiest Day*, a best-selling novel of this year and a Book of the Month Club selection. GEORGE PLIMPTON, graduate of Harvard and King's College, Cambridge, is at present working in Paris.

Poetry

ARTHUR BOYARS, graduate of Wadham College, Oxford, is the editor of *Manrake Review*.

GEOFFREY HILL is at present engaged in research studies at Oxford University. His poem, *Genesis*, appeared in the summer issue of THE PARIS REVIEW. Other poems have been broadcast by the BBC and have appeared in many Oxford publications.

VILMA HOWARD was born in Alabama and at an early age moved to New York City. She graduated from Fisk University and won a scholarship to the Mexico City College Writer's Center. She now lives in Paris where she is working on poems and a novel. *After the War* is her first published work.

WILL MORGAN is a graduate of Harvard where he studied with Archibald MacLeish. His fiction appeared in *The Harvard Advocate*. He is at present writing in New York City.

JOHN SIMON, whose verse has been published in *The Tiger's Eye* and elsewhere, is now teaching at the University of Washington.

HOWARD MOSS, the author of a book of poems, *The Wound and the Weather*, has a second book, *The Toy Fair*, to be published by Scribners in January. He has been on the staff of the *New Yorker* for five years.

Le Gérant et la Directrice : COLETTE DUHAMEL

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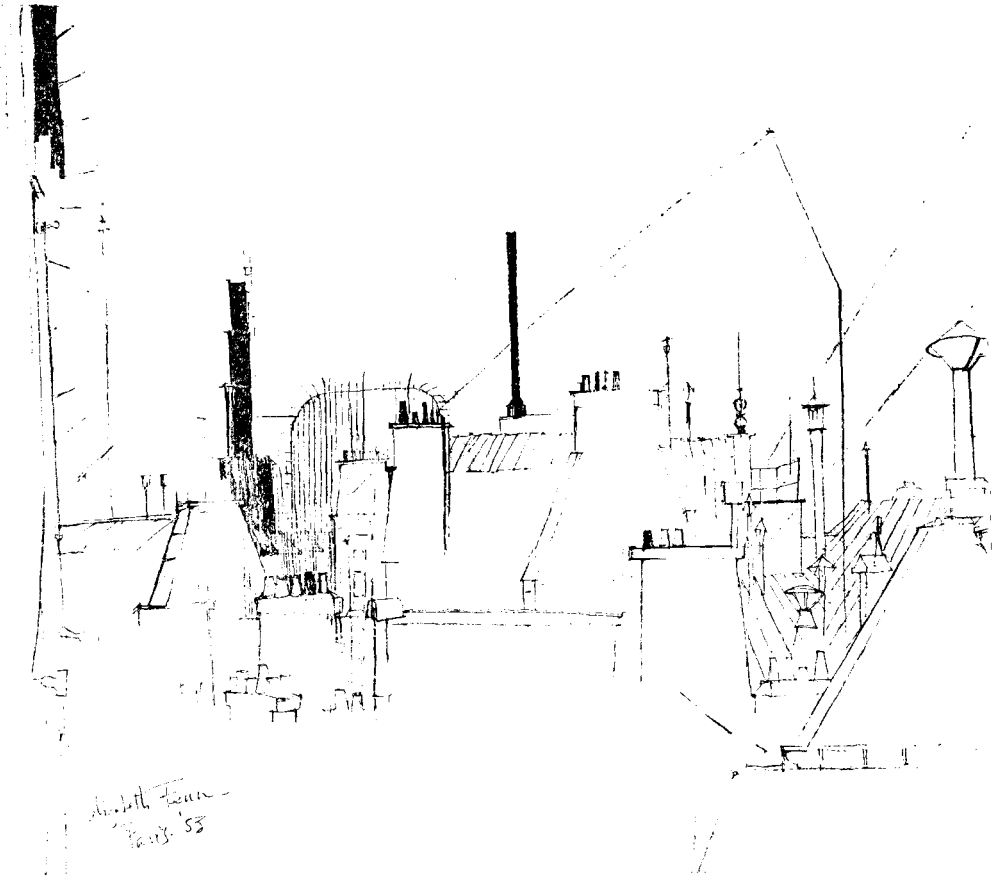

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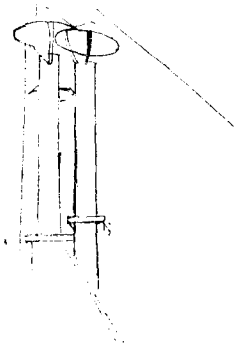

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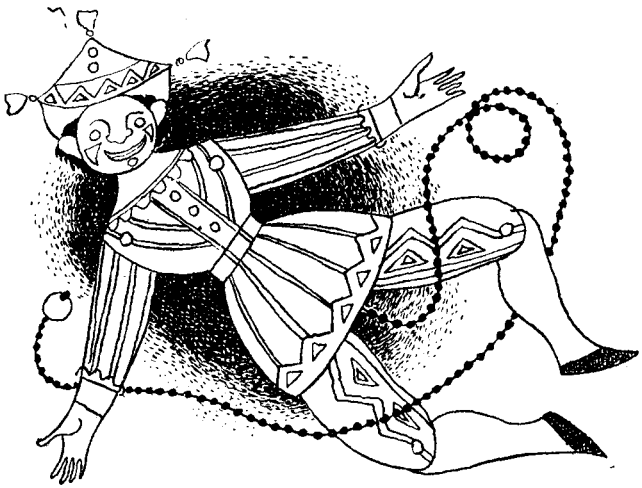

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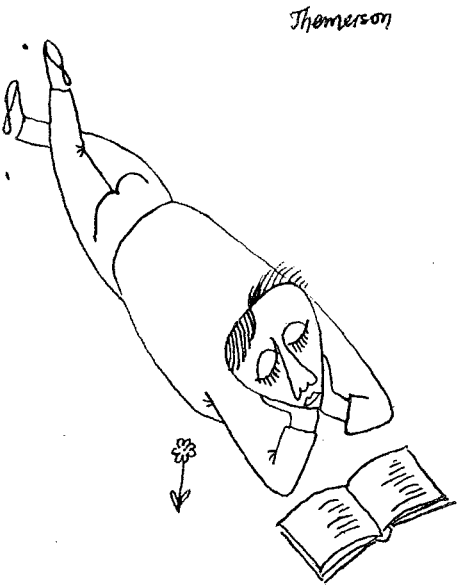

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